

THE TIMES

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Britain and America prepared to use force again

Tomahawk sub for Iraq watch

By MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE EDITOR, AND IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

BRITAIN'S first nuclear-powered submarine to be armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles is expected to be sent to the Gulf to join the aircraft carrier HMS *Invincible* which was ordered yesterday to leave for Iraq-watch duty after Christmas.

The announcement that the carrier, equipped with Sea Harriers and Sea King helicopters, is to return to the Gulf where it deployed earlier this year, was made by Tony Blair as he revealed details of last week's four-day air campaign against Iraq.

The probable involvement of HMS *Splendid*, the submarine which took part in successful test firings of Tomahawk missiles last month, was later disclosed by defence sources. The submarine will be operational early in the spring and is expected to be sent to the Gulf to add additional firepower to the British presence.

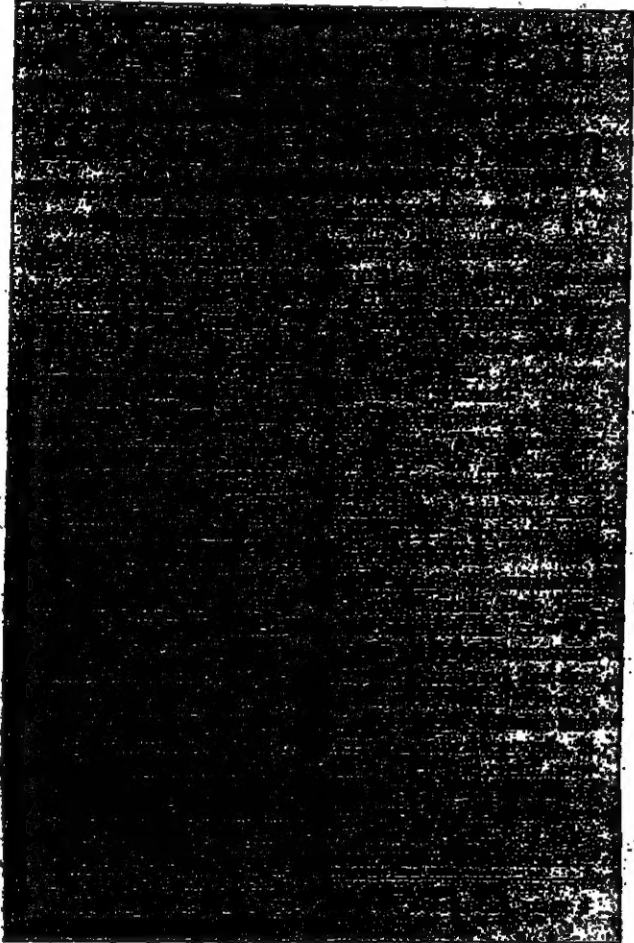
Although the Prime Minister in London and President Clinton in Washington insisted that Operation Desert Fox, which involved 72 hours of bombing, had severely damaged Iraq's military capabilities, both Governments acknowledged that they might need to use force again and that they intended to remain vigilant.

George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, said that when HMS *Invincible* arrived in the Gulf at the end of January, it would provide more firepower flexibility. Some of the Tornado GR1 bombers now in Kuwait, however, might return home depending on the security situation in the Gulf.

Yesterday RAF crews involved in Operation Desert Fox, expressed surprise that the raids had been called off after four days. Some of them were on their way to launch another bombing raid when they were told to return to their base in Kuwait. Pilots said there were targets left to hit.

However, there was relief elsewhere in the world that the raids were over, especially in Russia, where the lack of consultation by Washington prior to the launching of Operation Desert Fox caused anger and resentment.

The additional firepower of HMS *Splendid* in the Gulf



would guarantee a bigger role for Britain in any future military action against Iraq, although the Government has so far bought only 65 of the missiles from the United States.

Mr Robertson hinted at the possibility that RAF aircraft might become involved in special surveillance operations over Iraq to watch for signs of President Saddam Hussein attempting to rebuild the damaged facilities dedicated to developing weapons of mass destruction.

If, as Baghdad has threatened, the United Nations arms inspectors are not allowed back into Iraq, surveillance aircraft will have to take over the role of the weapons teams on the ground. At present American U2 spy planes fly surveillance missions over Iraq under the authority of the UN.

With much of Iraq's integrated air defence system now

damaged or destroyed by American and British bombs, the Prime Minister said yesterday: "We will intensify our surveillance and indeed are better able to carry it out as a result of the airstrikes in the past few days. We will know what is happening and whether Saddam is yet again getting in a position to threaten others. Our forces will remain ready to strike if necessary."

Senior officers at the Pentagon were already drafting plans yesterday for another series of airstrikes against Iraq early next year after the end of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month.

It was the start of Ramadan on Saturday which set the timetable for the limited airstrikes. The Pentagon had a more comprehensive list of about 250 targets but Mr Blair and Mr Clinton opted for a limited campaign of about 100 targets because of the time

available before Ramadan. No decision has been made about further airstrikes, but the fact that contingency plans are being made was seen as an acknowledgment that some of the damage caused by Operation Desert Fox could be repaired relatively quickly.

However, William Cohen, the US Defence Secretary, said that Saddam's ballistic missile programme had been set back by "at least a year".

General Norman Schwarzkopf, the 1991 Gulf War commander, commented: "It's a wonderful display of air power, but until you occupy the ground you cannot declare victory."

The Iraqi leader, however, was quick to claim victory yesterday, as he did after his forces were defeated in 1991. He also thanked Iraq's friends "all over the world" for their support.

Nizar Hamdoun, the Iraqi Ambassador to the UN, claimed that thousands of people had been killed or wounded in the four days of raids. This was dismissed as propaganda in London, although it was acknowledged that there might have been some civilian casualties.

Mr Clinton and Mr Blair, who was criticised by the Opposition yesterday for failing to have a long-term strategy on Iraq, set out to persuade other governments of the need to tighten the sanctions against Baghdad.

Mr Blair said: "I recognise that not everyone around the world has welcomed this (military) action but I believe, at heart, most understand its necessity. Quite apart from its substantial military effect, it sends a clear message to Saddam Hussein that we will not sit by."

Mr Blair contacted Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, to discuss what further steps might be taken to put pressure on Saddam to comply with the Security Council resolution obliging the Iraqi leader to give up his weapons of mass destruction.

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President Clinton with his daughter, Chelsea, leaving the Foundry Methodist Church in Washington yesterday. A protester outside urged him to resign "for the good of the world". Mrs Clinton did not attend the service.

Senators hint at deal to spare Clinton from trial

FROM DAMIAN WHITWORTH IN WASHINGTON

FACED with President Clinton's insistence that he will not resign and polls showing that impeachment has made him more popular than ever, senior senators began moves yesterday to spare the country the ordeal of making him stand trial for high crimes and misdemeanours.

Senators of both sides expressed hopes that the scandal that has consumed Washington for almost a year could be resolved swiftly and in a civilised fashion. Orrin Hatch, chairman of the Senate judiciary committee, hinted that a deal might be reached, perhaps involving censure of the President, which avoided the indignity of a trial.

A full trial before the 100 members of the Senate could involve the spectacle of Monica Lewinsky being asked explicit questions about her sexual activity with Mr Clinton to establish whether he lied



the Senate should "do a hard count" to see if 34 members would definitely vote against conviction and so render a trial pointless. The Senate, which has 55 Republican members and 45 Democrats, can vote at any time to adjourn the trial, which is expected to begin towards the end of next month.

"There are a variety of things we can do. I think we could come up with a way where everybody can vote on this, and vote their conscience, and it would be fair to all concerned, including the President," Mr Hatch said.

An NBC poll showed Mr Clinton's rating rose to 72 per cent from 68 per cent, and 62 per cent said he should serve out his term, up 11 points from a poll taken last Tuesday.

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IRA 'has no plans to disarm'

By MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

THE IRA is failing to make any discernible preparations for the downpayment of weaponry demanded by Unionists as the price of Sinn Féin's admission to government in February, according to RUC intelligence assessments.

Ronnie Flanagan, the Chief Constable, told *The Times* that he detected "no softening" in the IRA's position over recent months and the "critical

mass" of the republican movement remained "strongly opposed to any form of decommissioning at this stage."

A rare army convention two weeks ago had given the IRA's seven-man army council greater authority to act on its own initiative, but he did not believe it would change IRA policy on such a fundamental issue without the movement's clear support. Mr Flanagan be-

lieved, however, that external developments could yet sway the IRA. "Continuous positive movement in the political process, coupled with international pressure, would weigh very heavily in IRA thinking."

"The leadership of the republican movement is determined to avoid significant further splitting."

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OPERATION DESERT FOX: BLAIR'S BATTLE

Make-up can't quite hide worry lines over opening shots

THE image put on show at the Ministry of Defence yesterday to prove the effectiveness of the Iraqi bombing was pin-sharp and instantly recognisable, but had clearly been doctored, as war propaganda so often is. Tony Blair was wearing make-up.

It may have been to mask the facial ravages of four sleepless nights spent fretting over his first war. On the other hand, he had arrived fresh from being interviewed by Sir David Frost. Either way, it hid the care lines to somewhat greater effect than the Prime Minister's words.

Other images were much less distinct. General Sir Charles Guthrie, Chief of the

Defence Staff, showed his war snags, consisting of three two-second video clips purporting to show British bombs hitting important targets with chilling precision.

One looked remarkably like a raid on the surface of the Moon, and to the untutored eye the others might just as well have been staged on Salisbury Plain.

They had been taken, an earnest squadron leader explained, with a thermal imaging camera in the Tornado Laser Designator Pod. Oh well, that explains it, then; but what we really wanted was an instantaneous print, fresh from Boots' photo counter, of Saddam cowering under his dining-room table.

The strain was beginning to tell for the Prime Minister in his military debut, writes Alan Hamilton

But it was really Tony's show, with Robin Cook and George Robertson, dressed identically to their leader in dark suits, white shirts and restrained ties, sitting as mule makeweights on the rostrum as he held centre stage.

George was allowed a brief mention of his big toy, HMS Invincible, and Robin squeezed in a brief word about humanitarian aid, while General Guthrie was allowed to reel off figures of sorties flown and targets hit, accompanied by slightly vague maps.

More surprisingly, Tony made almost no mention of the Americans, and virtually none of the other woe-besetting their commander-in-chief, except to say in reply to a question that any suggestion of interlinked timing was offensive both to himself and Mr Clinton. The general clipped in to say he had been planning the raid for months.

In describing the military operation and its outcome, the Prime Minister adopted the more-in-sorrow-than-anger tone of a junior schoolmaster telling morning assembly that the very, very bad boy indeed in the lower fourth had had a sharp, painful caning.

The trousers had been taken down and the bottom smacked very accurately and extremely hard exactly as planned, much harder than in previous punishments.

Military types like to talk of "degrading" Saddam's weapons capability but yesterday's buzzword was "containment": the beast had been put back securely in his cage, and his evil plans had been set back by several years.

There was not a single use of the word "victory", only "success", within the strictly limited context of the four-day bombing operation.

Blair is not Thatcher: there was no hint of rejoicing in his performance yesterday, beyond relief at the total absence of British and American casualties. But, compared with his predecessor's military adventure in the South Atlantic, the long-term outcome of Blair's Raid is infinitely less certain, and when wider matters were raised he appeared infinitely less confident.

He had no effective response to the threat that Russia and China might unilaterally end sanctions against Iraq, beyond suggesting lamely that it would not necessarily affect Britain's ability to keep its sanctions up.

And, by participating in the latest action, had he not committed himself to a course that would require him to take military action again and again in future, as the beast once again wriggled through the bars of his cage? The alternative of doing nothing, Tony averred, would have left us with no credibility. He did not say with whom.

He was at pains, as ever, to stress that airstrikes were not directed at the Iraqi people, or even at its conscript army, Saddam, he said, was able to buy as much food and medicine as he wanted, even if he chose not to do so.

He suggested, without total conviction, that the means of getting humanitarian aid to those in Iraq who really needed it might be in need of improvement.

Tony's first war has been inconclusive, remains unfinished, and may yet prove hugely counter-productive even if, of the three leading participants, he is the only one who yesterday could dust himself down and consider himself relatively unscathed.

The others are suffering from either a crippled air force, a crippled defence system or a crippled presidency.

Nonetheless, the prime ministerial panstick may have been there to hide the worry lines of what happens next.

Three who took the big decisions

By Jill Sherman

THE key decisions over Britain's role in the 70-hour military action against Iraq were taken by Tony Blair, two Cabinet ministers and the Chief of the Defence Staff.

The Prime Minister, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, and General Sir Charles Guthrie were the main players in the "War Cabinet" that met daily since last Tuesday and has been in close contact with its American counterparts.

Six days ago, Mr Blair summoned the defence and overseas policy Cabinet committee

WAR CABINET

to a meeting in the Cabinet room, although not all the members were present.

The committee comprises Mr Blair, John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, Peter Mandelson, the Trade and Industry Secretary, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, Mr Cook and Mr Robertson. The Chief of the Defence Staff attends when necessary.

Last week, however, Mr Brown and Mr Mandelson attended only one of the meetings, after the main Cabinet meeting on Thursday, according to Downing Street sources.

On Tuesday, after a conversation with President Clinton, Mr Blair prepared ministers for the airstrikes deep inside Iraq.

The committee met twice on Wednesday, once at midday and again early in the evening a few hours before the Prime Minister made his announcement to the country that the airstrikes were going ahead.

The War Cabinet met again on Friday and on Saturday at 9.30am. Mr Cook met Mr Robertson at 8am on Saturday before going on to discuss the last day of airstrikes with Mr Blair and Sir Charles.

According to Whitehall officials, the meeting confirmed in principle that the airstrikes would come to an end on Saturday night.

IN the Weekend section of The Times on Saturday December 19, the photograph for the picture caption competition was of a member of the RAF display team, Flight Sergeant Rogoff, whose parachute failed to open when, dressed as Father Christmas, he made a jump at Aston Villa's ground. When the picture was chosen, we were unaware that Flight Sergeant Rogoff was still very seriously ill. We apologise to him and his family for the distress caused by the publication, and to any readers offended by it. The competition has been cancelled.

Blair defends action to contain Iraq

By Jill Sherman
CHIEF POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

The Prime Minister yesterday put up a strong defence of Britain's role in the four-day war against President Saddam Hussein, claiming it was "grotesque and insulting" to suggest that the timing was connected with President Clinton's domestic problems.

As some opinion polls indicated a third of the public were unhappy with Britain's decision to join in the airstrikes, Mr Blair and his Cabinet colleagues hit the airwaves with a string of interviews and statements about the success of the exercise. The Prime Minister insisted that the operation had always been planned as a four-day strategy and said it had been concluded because the key objectives had been met.

Last night he told British Tornado pilots that he could not sleep at night during Operation Desert Fox until he knew they had returned safely to base from their mission. In a special telephone call to officers stationed at the Al al-Salem base in Kuwait, Mr Blair told them they and their men had performed a tremendous job.

During an interview on BBC's Breakfast with Frost yesterday, Mr Blair hit back at suggestions that he was "Clinton's poodle" and said that he had insisted on action as soon as possible after Richard Butler's report on weapons inspections. "I was very, very insistent myself that this action was right to those people who say, 'Well, the timing of all this was geared to internal American af-

TIMING OF AIRSTRIKES

fairs. I find that grotesque and I find it offensive," said Mr Blair.

"I would never ever commit British servicemen and women unless I thought it was necessary to do. And I myself was insistent that we made sure the action was taken as quickly as possible after the Butler report," Mr Blair pointed out.

"To link the timing to American affairs is insulting and grotesque"

that because cruise missiles had been sent in first, it was possible to remove much of the air defence systems in the south of Iraq, which meant that the pilots and aircrews were able to get through safely in later missions.

He said that Britain and America had no alternative once the Butler report had been published showing that Saddam had failed to comply with Security Council resolutions. If they had not taken action, after warning Saddam the previous month that they would, then he would have known the threats were not serious.

The Butler report had been commissioned by the UN Security Council last month after President Clinton called off air-

strikes against Iraq. But Whitehall officials argued that the report had always been due to be published this month, if necessary to allow action before the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

At a press conference at the Ministry of Defence two hours later, the Prime Minister argued that the option to attack shortly after the Butler report was the only realistic one.

But he indicated it had been President Clinton's decision rather than his own. "Indeed I would have insisted on such an option — to take action as soon as possible."

The Prime Minister used a lengthy statement to justify the airstrikes both to the British public and to countries such as Russia, China and France, which have refused to support the military action.

He emphasised that the military objectives were to degrade the ability of the regime of Saddam to build and use weapons of mass destruction and to diminish the threat that the Iraqi dictator posed to his neighbours.

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NET LINKS

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Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, addresses a press conference in London at the weekend to describe the impact of four nights of British and American air raids and missile attacks on Iraq's military installations

Bombs shatter British image

By Michael Binyon
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

DIPLOMATIC FALLOUT

THE bombs have stopped, the fighters have been grounded and President Saddam Hussein is trumpeting his "victory" across the Middle East. For the West, and particularly for Britain and America, there looms the challenge: can diplomacy pick up the pieces?

At first glance, Britain's position and influence have been damaged. Across the Arab world, in screaming headlines and in noisy street protests, London is being denounced as one of the "aggressors" against Iraq. Popular support has rallied to Saddam and throughout the region there is a whiff of Suez: the perception that angry Muslim and world reaction, together with falling domestic support in Britain and America, forced the two powers to halt military operations earlier than they wanted.

Britain has also lost ground in Europe as well. European governments have been lukewarm at best, public opinion and European newspapers have questioned both aims and tactics of the Desert Fox operation, and the old image of London as the mere echo of Washington has been reinforced.

Britain's relations with Moscow have suffered, with the first ever recall of a Russian or Soviet Ambassador. There are dangerous implications for Kosovo, with a bitter Moscow unlikely to help the West in its dilemma over what to do. And President Milosevic, taking his cue from Saddam, may well conclude that thumbing his nose at the West may lead to military retaliation but that he would win the long-term political struggle: an Anglo-American strike in the Balkans now comes at a

price almost unacceptably high to domestic opinion and the rest of Europe.

Above all, the boast that Britain was one of the few countries able to project its influence through an efficient military machine and willingness to use it may suffer. The boast that Saddam has been "put back in his cage" will be challenged by those who say the military operation was no more than the "pinpricks" that military analysts counselled against: too short to affect Saddam's grip on power but intensive enough to be portrayed as an all-out military effort which Iraq survived.

President Chirac last night led a diplomatic effort to ease sanctions on Iraq and establish a new low-profile weapons inspection operation. In an intervention that signalled his determination to seize the initiative in the aftermath of the bombing raids, M Chirac said: "I am delighted that the raids have stopped, but naturally the problems remain."

Opting for a quiet life would raise the risks in Europe

By Lawrence Freedman

COMMENTARY

THE lack of enthusiasm for Operation Desert Fox was palpable. Those who authorised it insisted they did so with reluctance and then faced an uphill battle trying to convince the public of its value.

The background of the impeachment vote in Congress provided cynics with an easy gibe. The spectacle itself was hardly one to stir the heart: this was a clinical operation conducted by a technologically superior force. There was no reason to doubt that targets were destroyed, but fuzzy images of lumps disappearing in a puff of smoke had to compete with poignant images of injured children.

Words like degrade, diminish, contain and restrain in connection with President Saddam Hussein and his military power failed to inspire, yet Washington and London dared not

promise a decisive victory. The potential beneficiaries, either in Iraq or the rest of the Middle East, were either unable to speak out in support or else deemed it impolitic to do so.

The best arguments for Desert Fox lay as much in what might have been the consequences of inaction as the achievements of action. If the report by Richard Butler, the head of the United Nations weapons inspectors (Unscow), on Iraqi non-compliance had been followed by no more than an awkward shrugging of the shoulders then Saddam would have been relieved and emboldened. President Clinton, no doubt, would have been chastised for being so obsessed with saving his own skin that he had failed to exert leadership.

It is Saddam's staying power that

renders operations like this so frustrating. Airstrikes have been criticised because, short of a lucky hit, they cannot get rid of him. Few are willing to argue for a march on Baghdad. The essence of the Saddam problem is that one man has been able to organise a country on the basis of his own chronic insecurity. Brute force is his instrument of choice, whether dealing with subordinates or dissident sections of the Iraqi population or neighbouring countries.

This is the answer to the claim made by Simon Jenkins last Friday, that economic engagement is the best way of dealing with Saddam. The belief that there is always a non-violent counter to men of violence has been one of the great liberal delusions of this century. I agree with Jenkins that economic sanctions against Iraq have been counter-productive because they play to the strengths of his regime,

but it is wishful thinking to believe that their lifting would bring to an end his regime or turn it away from reliance on force.

An alternative view is to accept that around the world all sorts of terrible things may be going on but that, in the end, they are none of our business. According to Matthew Parris last Saturday, for Britain Desert Fox was nothing more than a pathetic attempt to keep up with the Americans. We must therefore unburden ourselves of our great power delusions.

This goes to the heart of the issue in British foreign policy. It is tempting to opt for a quiet life. Britain has this option more than most. America has even more, for the world's trouble-spots are even further from its shores.

This is an attitude of extraordinary short-sightedness. Events in the Middle East, the Balkans and Eastern Europe impinge directly on our security

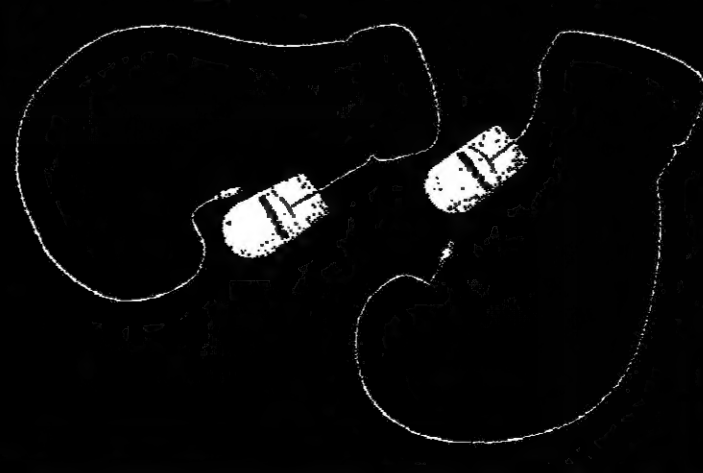
and prosperity. The interests at stake here are more European than American and to rely on Washington acting when none of its allies are ready to bestir themselves is most likely to result in American withdrawal, leaving this Continent unable to cope with the great dramas to come. Britain, of course, cannot solve the world's problems by itself but that does not mean that its only role is of deputy sheriff.

Desert Fox may or may not turn out to be a turning point in the Saddam saga. Its current importance is that it has brought home the difficulties faced by Western governments in making the case for limited military intervention as part of a long-term strategy. Engagements of this type are often uncomfortable. They demand coming to terms with a class of problems of vital international importance that are not easily solved but just get worse through inattention.



The desert fox insignia on RAF pilots' uniform

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OPERATION DESERT FOX: HITS AND MISSES

Iraqi war machine 'crippled' by raids

OPERATION Desert Fox involved four nights of air strikes, 250 bombing raids lasting 72 hours, more than 400 cruise missile launches and nearly 100 targets hit. Not one American or British serviceman or woman was hurt.

Yesterday, in assessing the effectiveness of the air campaign against Iraq which involved 650 sorties, the United States and Britain declared after examining surveillance photographs that enough damage had been achieved to put back President Saddam Hussein's programme on weapons of mass destruction and other key elements of his war machine by several years.

However, Tony Blair admitted at a press conference at the Ministry of Defence that he and President Clinton had decided to go for a "limited" campaign because of the need to take immediate action after the publication of the damning report last week by Richard Butler, the head of the United Nations arms inspection team, and because of the approach of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting.

General Sir Charles Guthrie, Chief of the Defence

Michael Evans reports on the military assessment of 400 cruise missile attacks on 100 strategic targets

Staff, said at the same press conference that it was clear Saddam had made a "serious miscalculation". He had assumed that America would be preoccupied with domestic matters — the impeachment proceedings against Mr Clinton — and that no attack would be launched so close to Ramadan.

Mr Blair said that one option discussed with President Clinton had been to wait until Ramadan was over before launching airstrikes, but that would have given Saddam five weeks since the publication of the Butler report to prepare for the attacks.

The Pentagon and General Guthrie revealed that 93 targets had been hit, some of them several times. This appeared to underline the timing limitations imposed on Operation Desert Fox, because one of the Pentagon's optional list

of targets is understood to have covered more than 250 sites. Mr Blair insisted on Saturday, however, that the plan all along had been to restrict Desert Fox to four days, which still meant going into the start of Ramadan.

There were reports that Iraq might declare Ramadan a day earlier than other Muslim countries. However, in the end the air campaign broke the Ramadan deadline by only a few hours, with the final bombing being carried out before sunrise on Saturday.

General Guthrie, who has been in contact "almost on a daily basis" since mid-November with General Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, outlined the bombing strategy. "Just as a modern car is useless with its engine electronics removed, so Saddam's military machine cannot function without a few

key elements. It is these critical components which we have been destroying," Saddam, he said, had a large conventional military force, consisting of 23 divisions and more than a million men under arms. To control them, and "to protect himself and his henchmen, he has hidden behind a highly sophisticated air defence system", working secretly on programmes to develop chemical and biological weapons.

As part of the bombing campaign, more than 30 sites which were central to Saddam's chemical and biological weapons efforts were attacked, including a factory which maintained his stocks of missiles, around Baghdad and Tikrit, the Iraqi leader's home town, north of the capital. One site that was reported to have been hit was the Jebel Mahkoul nuclear and chemical warfare plant near Tikrit.

The airfields and hangars which house "what has become known as his Anthrax Air Force" were also hit. These, he said, were his Czech jet trainers, called L29s, which had been converted into remote-controlled drones to carry special aerosol equipment to spread deadly anthrax on his enemies. "I believe we have set back Saddam's capacity to deliver these terrible weapons by missile or drone aircraft by several years."

Showing a video clip of the moment when one hangar containing an L29 was hit, he said: "This soft-skinned hangar was the facility for the L29 'drone of death'. I think you can clearly see that no aircraft will be flying from there for quite a while."

Defence sources said that RS2 bombers had targeted the Baath Party headquarters in a suburb of Baghdad because it was known to contain computers and equipment related to Saddam's chemical and biological weapons programme. The walls of the building, they said, were "very thick" to withstand attacks. "But the air-launched cruise missiles went

through the roof and would have caused huge damage to the internal walls of the buildings," they said. General Guthrie listed other targets: more than 30 "critical" facilities controlling the integrated air defences in southern Iraq, 20 sites which Saddam used to control his conventional war machine, and ten facilities used by the Republican Guards and their "sinister inner organisations such as the Special Republican Guard" that prop up the regime of Saddam.

General Guthrie said: "We have sent a powerful message to the Republican Guards which Saddam kept out of harm's way during the Gulf War. They know that their cosy existence has now been shattered. We can reach out and strike them." Defence sources said later that there

would have been casualties among the Republican Guards, because not all had dispersed by the time of the first night's raids.

One video clip showed a Republican Guard armoured brigade headquarters being destroyed. It contained communi-

'Saddam would have difficulty mounting any offensive operation'

cations equipment "necessary to deploy and direct the brigade" which controlled up to 100 of Saddam's most capable tanks, including Russian T72s.

Although Iraq fired anti-aircraft guns, especially in Baghdad, not one surface-to-air missile was launched against the US and British bombers. How-

ever, this was because on the first night of the raids, the Iraqis were caught by surprise, and many of the key air defence sites, including the Sam missile facilities, were successfully targeted, putting the radar that controls the missiles out of action. The Sam 3s,

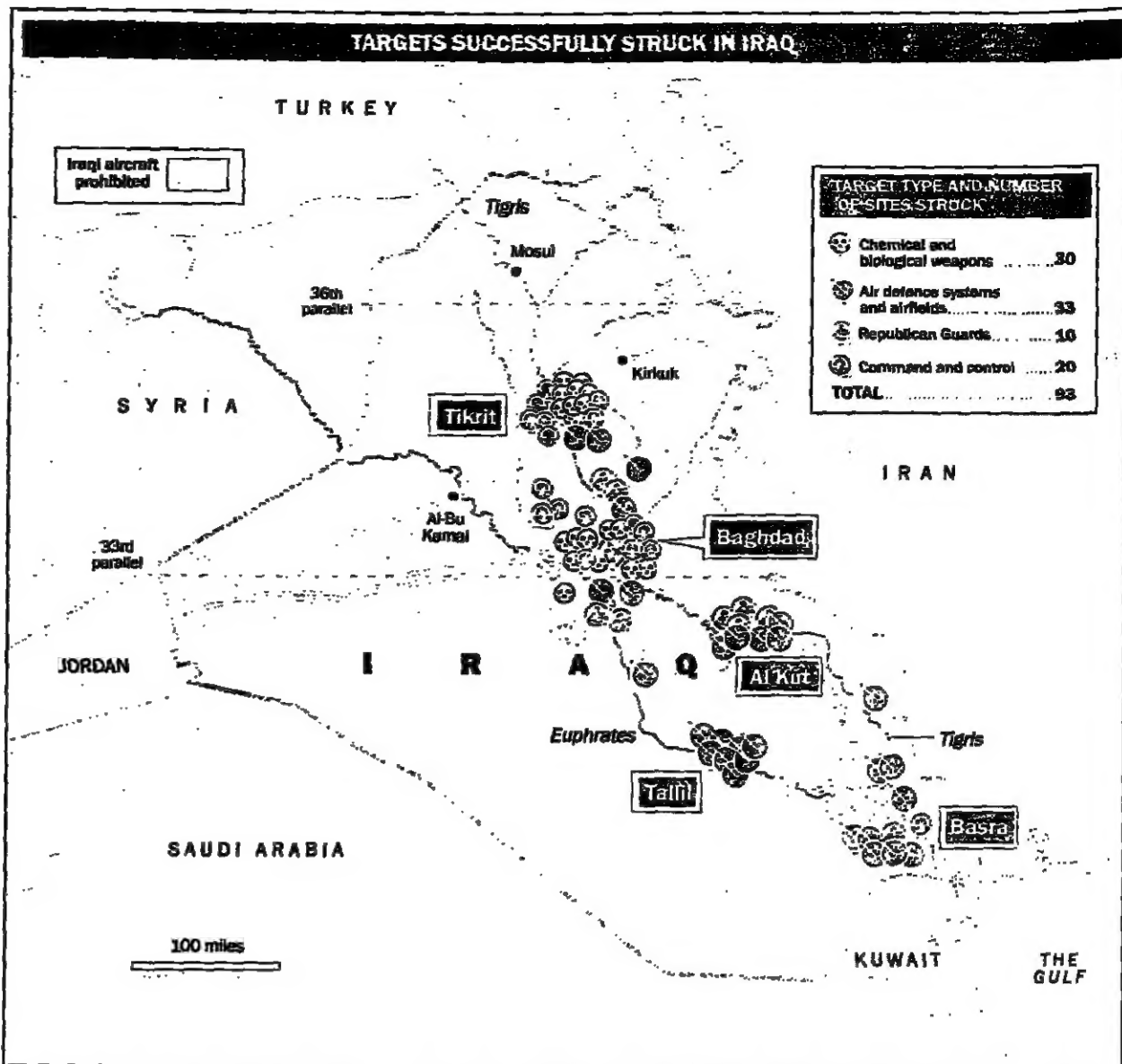
which can operate up to 60,000ft, were specifically targeted to remove a potent threat for the allied aircraft.

General Guthrie summed up the results of Operation Desert Fox by saying: "If we had been on the receiving end of the kind of campaign that Saddam Hussein has just expe-

rienced, I would have to report to the Prime Minister this morning that we would have severe difficulties mounting any substantial offensive or defensive operation." He concluded: "By any measure I count that as success."

In Washington, General Shelton gave details of three targets, showing photographs of buildings with large holes where bombs had crashed through the roofs. The first was a missile repair facility at Taji, 20 miles north of Baghdad, where the Iraqis used to repair all their surface-to-air missiles and also to develop ballistic missiles.

The second was the Zaafaraniyah facility where Iraq made components and designed machine tools for military equipment. The third was at Shahiyah, where rocket and missile engines were tested.



Deck hands on USS Enterprise, the aircraft carrier, turn their attentions to routine cleaning in the Gulf yesterday after President Clinton halted airstrikes against Iraq.

Women pilots fly into history

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

AMERICAN women pilots made military history by flying combat missions for the first time during Operation Desert Fox. Three of them piloted fighters launched from the deck of the carrier USS Enterprise in the Gulf. But they shrugged off its significance. Lieutenant Kendra Williams, 26, from Alaska, who flew her F18 on two bombing missions, insisted it was "not a big deal". The women declined to give interviews to American reporters on the carrier because they did not want to stand apart from their male squadron mates. "They consider themselves navy aviators first and foremost," a naval official said at the Pentagon.

He confirmed it was the first time women aviators had launched and fired weapons. A change in Pentagon policy allowing women to fly combat missions was made in 1993, two years after the Gulf War. Since then, women pilots have logged thousands of hours flying patrols over Bosnia and the "no-fly" zones of Iraq.

Other women involved in last week's bombardment flew and operated F-16 aircraft that employed electronic countermeasures to jam President Saddam Hussein's radar sites and surface-to-air missiles. More women pilots were serving on the second carrier, USS Carl Vinson, which arrived on Friday, and with the US Air Force, but the Pentagon did not have a precise tally. Throughout the US Navy there are some 250 women pilots, and more than 50,000 women on active duty make up about 13 per cent of the Navy's total force.

Iraq skilled at keeping deadly arsenal on the move to evade discovery

By MICHAEL EVANS DEFENCE EDITOR

DESPITE the claims in Washington and London yesterday that the air campaign had achieved its objectives, there remain fears that President Saddam Hussein's ability to "disperse and deceive" will have left much of his key equipment untouched by American and British guided bombs.

Although Tony Blair warned the Iraqi leader yesterday that Britain and America were prepared to use force again if he tried to restart his weapons of mass destruction programme, no one doubts that Saddam will have managed to disperse chemical and biological equipment before the start of the bombings.

George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, told The Times last night that Saddam used schools and hospitals to hide production equipment and computers related to his secret programmes. "And obviously we couldn't target schools and hospitals," he said.

Nor could they target storage sites suspected of concealing nerve agents and anthrax because of the risk of causing a lethal fallout that would have killed civilians.

So instead, the decision was taken to attack the key command structures and Republican Guard facilities that were

WHAT SADDAM HAS LEFT

known to be connected to the chemical and biological warfare programme. But after seven years of trying to discover Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, the United Nations arms inspectors have learned that the Iraqi leader, with the help of a huge organisation in the Republican Guards dedicated to protecting his chemical and biological systems, is expert at evasion.

Khidhir Hamza, an Iraqi nuclear scientist who defected to the United States in 1995, has revealed that the Republican

Guards moved material all around the country and that on one memorable occasion parked valuable equipment in date palm groves near a technical college. The announcement by Saddam last week, just before the start of the Anglo-American air campaign, that he was dividing Iraq into four military regions, was a signal that a plan for a nationwide dispersal programme was under way.

Scott Ritter, the American official who resigned from the UN Special Commission (Unscm) on Iraq in August, told The New York Times yesterday that the Iraqi Military Industrial Commission had an emergency dispersal plan.

He said: "The commission has an evacuation plan for each facility. It runs an emergency operation centre... [it is] linked in with an organisation called the joint committee, which is run by the presidential secretary." Saddam ruthlessly uses civilians to hide some of his most precious war equipment and files.

Exiled Iraqis have claimed that Saddam's henchmen turn up and demand that ordinary citizens look after military equipment in their homes, until the danger of a UN arms inspection — or a bombing raid — is over.

Similarly, the Republican Guards do not keep their Russian T72 tanks in obvious depots or barracks but disperse them across the country to avoid being targeted. Mr Ritter said that the last time he had inspected one particular Republican Guard barracks which was destroyed in the latest raids, the buildings contained just "old uniforms, expired ammunition, food supplies, derelict bedding and smelly latrines".

One vital part of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction programme can never be destroyed. That is the knowledge and technological expertise which Iraqi scientists and engineers have built up over the years, much of it acquired by Iraqi postgraduate students doing courses in microbiology at British, American and other European universities.



Children in Baghdad examine the remains of the entrance to the Labour Ministry building yesterday.

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TESCO Every little helps



Saddam puts gloss on four days of strikes

A HAGGARD but defiant President Saddam Hussein predictably claimed victory yesterday as the Arab world breathed a collective sigh of relief that America and Britain had ended the heaviest air-strikes on Iraq for eight years.

Despite his destroyed palaces and shattered command centres, the bombing had backfired politically by splitting the international community and winning wide Arab sympathy for Iraq, according to commentators in the region.

The theme was at the heart of a taped televised address by the Iraqi leader to his people. "God rewarded you and delighted your hearts with the crown of victory," he declared. He went on to thank Iraq's friends "all over the world". Britain and America were not mentioned by name but Saddam referred to them as "infidels" and "enemies of Islam".

His triumphal tone had a less hollow ring than usual. Air strikes were hadrowly averted on three previous occasions over the past 13 months when he caved in to Washington's demands at the eleventh hour. This time he had refused to blink and has emerged as uncompromising as ever.

The bombing gave the Iraqi leader, determined to keep his weapons of mass destruction, the opportunity finally to end seven years of intrusive inspections. "The commission of spies is behind us," his Vice-President, Taha Yassin Ramadan, declared hours before the ceasefire was announced. "The time for diplomacy is

Defiant leader declares end to UN inspections, reports Michael Theodoulou

over. We will not accept any conditions. Everything in the past is now behind us."

Some opposition groups were encouraged that the bombing had targeted the pillars of Saddam's repressive regime, signalling Washington's

BAGHDAD

desire to topple him. However, there was no early sign that his grip on power had been weakened by the targeting of the Republican Guards and the Special Republican Guards.

Other dissidents said Operation Desert Fox had only increased the misery of ordinary Iraqis while leaving a wounded Saddam ready to crush possible unrest with increased determination. "They will be facing Saddam as an injured wolf who will drastically increase his reign of terror over the coming weeks to make up for the losses he may have sustained and to silence any dissent to his rule," a spokesman for the Islamic Daawa Party, a Shia opposition group, said. Iraqi officials took foreign re-

porters to the southern city of Basra yesterday in an attempt to discredit reports that army units in the area had mutinied during the bombardment. "The whole thing was very ill-advised," said Aburish, a Palestinian author who is writing a biography of the Iraqi leader, told *The Times*. "The bombing had no specific aim. Saddam has been defanged for some time. They keep talking about the threat to Iraq's neighbours, but have you heard any of them saying they are worried Iraq will attack them?" He added: "In order to get rid of Saddam you have to give people on the ground an incentive. Don't bomb them. Pull back and say, 'If he goes, you can export all the oil you want to rebuild the country.'"

Washington now appears committed to working with the Iraqi National Congress, a coalition of opposition groups based in London. A sum of \$60 million has been earmarked under the recent Iraqi Liberation Act to provide military equipment and training.

The rebels propose a gradual approach, beginning with the establishment of a liberated enclave in the restive Shia south of the country that would attract disaffected Iraqi troops. As the rebels succeed, territory under their control swells, enabling them to gain the confidence of Western backers who have viewed them as too divided to be a credible threat to Saddam.

But Washington has been silent on the rebels' key demand to back the "no-fly" zone over southern Iraq, policed by US and British warplanes, with a "no-drive zone" to keep out Saddam's tanks and artillery. America's allies in the region are deeply suspicious of the plan.

Saudi Arabia, fearing its own Shia minority opposes the use of southern Iraq as a springboard to dislodge Saddam. Turkey, with its rebellious Kurds, has no desire to see the Kurds of northern Iraq used to launch an insurrection against Baghdad. Saddam's enemies say Washington will have to do more to convince them it has a coherent strategy to oust him.

□ Cairo: An Iraqi opposition group, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, said a cousin of Saddam, an ex-Defence Minister, Ali Hassan al-Majid, who commands the military in the south, executed several officers for disobeying orders. (AP)

OPERATION DESERT FOX: PROPAGANDA WAR



British pilots relaxing at their base close in Kuwait yesterday after four days of airstrikes. Some were dejected by the order to stop bombing

'We stopped the bombing too soon'

FROM DANIEL MCGRORY IN KUWAIT CITY

RAF crews felt "surprised and dejected" when Operation Desert Fox was halted while they were in mid-air and just minutes from bombing targets deep inside Iraq.

The order came as they were flying through the fiercest bombardment yet from Iraqi missiles and anti-aircraft batteries which the crews say proves that President Saddam Hussein still possesses a formidable armory.

Standing by his Tornado jet yesterday, one pilot summed up the mood saying: "We stopped the bombing too soon. We know there were targets we still had to hit."

At their desert airbase in Kuwait, Mark, the formation leader of the last four British Tornados to take off, told of the "stunning moment" when he heard the four words that recalled their mission.

"We had gone off just before midnight and were 15 minutes into the flight, holding just on the border when the radio crackled and the voice said simply, 'The package is cancelled.'"

"I knew what that code meant but didn't believe it, so asked my navigator if I had got it right and asked base to authenticate it. We must have waited 30 seconds or so, and were saying to each other something must have gone wrong."

"When it was repeated I radioed the message to the other three planes in the formation. As they acknowledged, I could hear the total disappointment in their voices."

Mark, 35, from Bristol, said: "I felt dejected. We were fired up, we were carrying bombs, closing fast on our tar-

get which was less than 20 minutes away, and you just feel a sense of utter frustration and disbelief."

"After the coded recall the base asked me what I was going to do now, I said, 'Dump my fuel and go home if it's all the same to you', and I looked back over my shoulder to Iraq and where we should have been doing our job."

Their intended target was again the main Republican Guard barracks of Al Kut, just south of Baghdad, which his navigator, Lawrie, described as "an incredible size, at least four times

RAF RECALL

decided Saddam had been punished enough. "That, thankfully, is a political judgment and not one I have to make," Captain Burroughs said yesterday shortly after he read a message of congratulations from the Prime Minister to his squadron.

Late on Saturday night the first wave of four Tornados had dropped all their eight Paveway 2,000lb bombs and returned safely just as Whitehall officials contacted the commander.

"I guessed then what was about to happen," he said. "Someone from the Defence Minister's office called, gave

As the four jets screamed back to the base they were met by disbelieving ground crews

the size of Heathrow". Lawrie, 34, who flew 25 sorties in the 1991 Gulf War, said: "We knew this was a limited campaign but we expected to see a few more days' action yet."

"I then had to tell the eight crew who were just about to get into their planes for our scheduled third wave that they wouldn't be needed. They looked at me in disbelief."

The third night of operations saw Saddam offer his strongest retaliation yet. A 37-year old navigator — part of the successful first wave — said: "I was shocked by the intensity of the anti-aircraft fire. For a finite time, maybe only a couple of seconds, I was like a rabbit caught in headlights of a car. But then we got to the target and hit it."

me the order, and then listened on the line to the pilots' chat as the four planes in the air landed back safely. Only after that was Tony Blair going to announce it officially.

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His pilot, at 40 one of the oldest in the formation, said: "I don't know if we have made a difference in a few days. I don't know if it will have changed things in Iraq but I don't think it will."

"Sandman", 36, a navigator from Essex, said: "There probably were Iraqi Republican Guard casualties from our attacks, but what we have done probably won't sink to us until we get home and back with our families."

It was this formation which attacked the hangar hiding what George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, called "the troves of death" — the pilotless aircraft that could have delivered lethal anthrax spores.

Sandman described how they destroyed an ammunition storage hangar. "I watched the bombs strike inside and turned not our heads away, but we saw the first bombs going home. When the third bomb hit, the sky was lit up by what looked like a mushroom shape of orange light."

Kate Ansell, 30, a squadron intelligence officer, said: "I was so pleased to see those planes land safely, as three of the crew had handed me letters for their families if anything went wrong. There were no tears or anything last night mainly because we know it's not really over."

□ Relief at home: Families of RAF servicemen last night celebrated the end of the hazardous bombing raids over Iraq with a carol service at their base in Lossiemouth (Shirley English writes). Children, wives, girlfriends and parents gathered at St Aidan's Church to give thanks that the lives of their loved ones had been spared.



Iraqis in Baghdad listen to radio news at the end of the raids, after which celebrations broke out

Journalists denounce Arafat's censors

BY CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

ARAB REACTION

LEADING international media organisations yesterday denounced draconian attempts by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority to censor the reporting of pro-Iraqi demonstrations that have swept through self-rule areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Their action came as Israel's Cabinet voted yesterday to suspend the Wye peace deal until Palestinians meet conditions set by Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister. Today he faces a Knesset confidence vote which could bring about the Government's defeat.

The pro-Saddam protests among the 2.5 million Palestinians in the territories still controlled overall by Israel were

matched by violent pro-Saddam riots across the Arab world, with US and British property the target of attacks by mobs in Syria. Last night, the Syrian Foreign Ministry apologised for Saturday's violence and promised to improve security around the US and British missions. But no mention was made of compensation for damage incurred, including that inflicted on books and furniture in the offices of the British Council.

The London-based *Al-Hayat* paper reported that an extreme Islamic militant group, Islamic Jihad-Vanguards of Conquest, had threatened to avenge the American and British air attacks on Iraq. Eight

Palestinian journalists in Gaza affiliated with the American ABC, the French Antenne 2 and the German ARD television networks were held after filming the burning of US flags in contravention of an order from Mr Arafat, who is embarrassed in the wake of President Clinton's de facto support for a Palestinian state.

The Gaza offices of Associated Press, the US news agency, were also seized by the Palestinian security forces for the same reason. In the West Bank, five local Palestinian television stations were also shut to prevent their coverage of the pro-Saddam protests, which often turned violent.

The bans were lifted after

the end of Operation Desert Fox was announced, but Maher TV in Beirut refused to reopen until it was given a more complete explanation for the closure order. Samir Musia, the station's owner, said: "They have to give me a logical explanation: until then I will stay closed."

In a letter to Mr Arafat, the Tel-Aviv based Foreign Press Association, which represents 250 journalists and television organisations from all over the world, said of the closure of the AP office in Gaza: "President Clinton himself would be most dismayed to learn that his country's main news outlet has been banned from operating in an area to which he has paid such a significant visit."

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists

also protested against the curbs on coverage. It urged Mr Arafat to allow the offices to reopen and denounced "attempts to silence independent journalism in violation of the right to free expression."

The Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate said in a statement that the closing of offices and the detention of the journalists was a violation of their basic rights. It said its members would strike and stage a sit-in at the Palestinian Legislature in Ramallah today.

A common theme of the Arab protests, which Arab diplomats believe would have become much more serious had the raids on Iraq continued further into Ramadan, was that all Arabs, not just Saddam, were being targeted by the US and British attacks.



Members of the Jordanian opposition wave an Israeli flag with "Down with Israel" written on it during an Amman demonstration in protest against the airstrikes

'Thatcher was right — Europe is blind and cowardly' Neighbour's confidence turns again to fear

BY DANIEL MCGRORY

KUWAIT

THE shoppers bunched together in front of the giant television screen in the polished marble mall watching Tony Blair call off Operation Desert Fox. They looked baffled at the Prime Minister's conviction that Saddam Hussein was "back in his cage" and could not menace them again.

A handful of Kuwaitis stayed long enough to listen to all of Mr Blair's explanation, though most quickly gathered up their children and hurried to their cars fearful of what comes next.

For the four days of airstrikes Kuwaitis were in uncharacteristically confident mood that they might be rid of their neighbour's threats. Unlike previous crises, only a few had rushed to the air-

port to escape. There was no panic buying, no sudden dash to empty the banks of dollars. Most concede that because the speed of this aerial attack caught them by surprise. The stock market soared.

For the first time since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, the Kuwaitis felt secure and they luxuriated in watching pictures of Baghdad being pounded on successive nights. One businessman said: "It is good to see Baghdad feeling afraid for once. Usually it is us."

But a Kuwaiti official confessed last night: "We feel more vulnerable than when Desert Fox began. The US Marines are going to be pulled back from the border, so who is watching Saddam?"



Zeffirelli: scenario "same as 50 years ago"

Europe's failure to act in the Iraq crisis has made Franco Zeffirelli, the stage and film director, ashamed to be European

tion ran at the time of Hitler, to those events and actions that led to the horrors inflicted by the Nazis. At the time, the world was shamefully divided over the crisis and it was only because of the moral conviction and forceful actions of the Anglo-Saxon peoples that mankind was saved.

Again today, it is the British and the Americans who stand alone to ensure the survival of humanity and world freedom.

I cannot help but remember with deepest admiration the powerful words of Margaret Thatcher who, when faced with the "dream" of a united Europe — which from the first was riven with discord — re-

minded us that the Anglo-Saxons had, throughout history, received nothing from Europe but problems, threats and mortal danger and that it was due only to Britain and America that the world had been saved.

I hope with all my heart that military action against Iraq will destroy once and for all this infamous character and so open to his unhappy people a future of democracy and freedom. But at the same time the affair brings to our attention the unspeakable confusion that exists in Europe and elsewhere in the world at a time when every civilised nation ought, without the least confusion, to express what so clearly and promptly is advocated yet again

only by Britain and America. We have reasons to be ashamed that Europe has not learnt anything from the painful lessons of the past and still leaves those who saved us 50 years ago to stand alone, assigning them to do our dirty work, saving our children from elimination through chemical and biological warfare.

I am sincerely ashamed to be a European, to come from the same continent as France, Germany, Italy and Russia. Is it conceivable that not one of them has felt the urgency to join with the same nations that rescued us and that once again are saving us, putting at risk the lives of their men and women? How proud I would be if at this historic moment we had been at their side, fighting as one against an evil foe.

Baroness Thatcher was right: Europe is always blind, cowardly, ungrateful, incorrigible — a continent without hope.

THE TIMES MONDAY DECEMBER 21 1992
Police
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Minder
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Police hunt for toddler after mother's killing

By STEWART TENDLER
CRIME CORRESPONDENT

POLICE began a nationwide hunt yesterday for the two-year-old daughter of a young mother who was stabbed and beaten to death in her home.

Sharon Lester, 24, was found by her mother, lying in a ground-floor room in her terraced home in Ling Street, in the Kensington area of Liverpool. She had been dead for at least 48 hours, but neither she nor her daughter, Jade, had been seen for a week.

Police are trying to discover the identity and whereabouts of the girl's father. They also want to trace two men seen at the dead woman's house with a white van two hours before the body was found on Saturday afternoon.

Detective Superintendent Russ Walsh, who is leading the investigation, said he hoped that the child had been left with someone who was not aware of what had happened to her mother.

Jade and her mother, who was unemployed, were close and had an "excellent relationship", he said. The child, attended a local nursery, but had not been seen there for a week. She and her mother were last seen at a neighbour's house at midnight on December 12.

Mr Walsh said: "There is a distinct possibility that this little girl is in the safe hands of somebody who has been told whatever story and she thinks there is nothing untoward."

Jade last seen with her mother on December 12

He said that police were keen to speak to anybody who may know Jade, particularly people who worked in the medical profession: doctors, health visitors and, in particular, people from nurseries, who may have seen Jade during the week.

There have been reported sightings in the past week, but police are not satisfied with them. Mr Walsh said he did not believe that Jade had been killed because she had seen the murder. Her mother had no known connections with crime and, at present, the murder was being treated as a motiveless attack.

Police are also interviewing Miss Lester's boyfriend, John Park, an unemployed joiner, who was traced yesterday. Miss Lester's mother is also helping police to make an inventory of the contents of the house to determine if anything has been stolen. There were no signs that it had been searched. Po-

lice are also trying to find a white box-type van with roller shutters at the rear that was in Ling Street at around 12.30pm on Saturday. Detectives have been told that a man in his 20s left from Miss Lester's house and signalled to the driver of the van to take it round to the alley behind the house.

Police also want to trace a man who was in Ling Street repairing a yellow van at the same time, in the hope that he might have seen something.

In Ling Street yesterday June Joel, 41, recalled hearing Miss Lester's mother scream when she found her daughter's body. "She went next door and when the police arrived she came out on the pavement and seemed to collapse," she said. Miss Lester and her daughter had been living in the street for about seven months. At one time a man had been living with her and then moved out.



Joella at her christening yesterday. "It was a nice service. I really enjoyed it," she said

Baptism begins Joella's new life

By A CORRESPONDENT

A CHILD of ten, whose family battled for years to have her officially recognised as a girl, has been christened with her new name.

Joella Holliday was wrongly registered as a boy on her birth certificate after a rare medical condition made it difficult to determine her gender. After an operation at the age of 18 months, she clearly became a girl, but, until this month, her family were refused permission to change her name officially from Joel.

Her new life began yesterday with a simple 20-minute service at St Mary's Church in her home village of Pinchbeck, near Spalding, Lincolnshire.

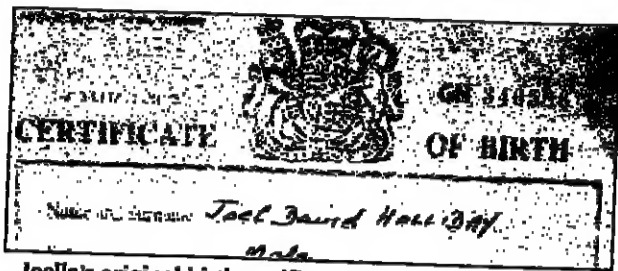
"I'm just pleased it's all been sorted out," Joella said afterwards. "It was a nice service. I really enjoyed it."

Joella was accompanied by her mother, Julia Farmer, her stepfather, Jason, and her half-brother, Jarred, 6.

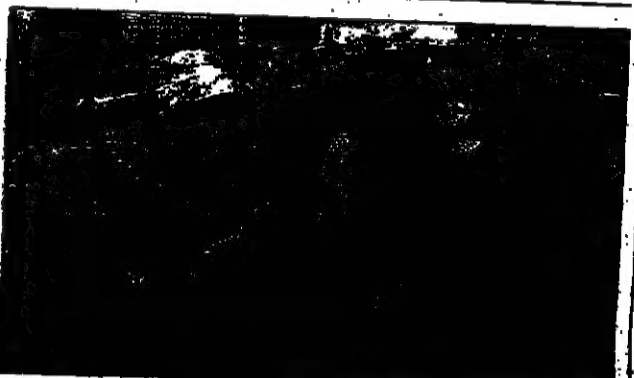
Ms Farmer said: "I still can't believe all this has worked out... the news that her birth certificate is going to be changed was just so unexpected. It was a lovely service and unique. Joella did very well."

Dianne Miller, the local solicitor who represented the family in their legal fight, was one of four godparents.

About 30 close friends and family were invited to the service, which was specially written by the vicar, the Rev David Hill, and approved by the Bishop of Grantham.



Joella's original birth certificate. She now has a new one



Kathryn Learner with the car that was under a lorry

Driver saw stars after lorry crash

By TIM JONES

A DRIVER told of her escape yesterday after the roof of her car was sliced off when it shot beneath a lorry that was blocking her way on a dark country road.

Kathryn Learner, 25, was left looking at the stars when she emerged from the other side of the lorry. Miss Learner, a customer services officer, was driving home through Small Dole, West Sussex, to change for her office Christmas party when the lorry loomed before her.

Screaming, she slammed on her brakes and swerved to try to avoid it before closing her eyes and ducking as her Peugeot 306 disappeared beneath the trailer, which confronted her sideways.

"She thought she was facing certain death and was staggered when she emerged on the other side with only a few cuts and bruises."

Moments after the accident, which happened at the weekend, a 57-year-old man and his wife were taken to hospital after their car crashed into the lorry. The woman, who had to be cut from the wreckage, suffered broken bones in her feet.

while her husband was treated for shock and bruising.

Miss Learner, who lives in Woodmanacote, West Sussex, said: "I remember screaming as I went under the lorry and then just waiting for it all to stop. I opened my eyes, looked up and there were sky and stars above me."

"The truck was like a wall in the road in front of me. I tried to swerve round it to the right, but the lorry was still in my view. I then knew I was going to hit it and just ducked down, shut my eyes and heard the impact of the glass smashing around me."

When she got out of the car, it looked as if it had been attacked by a giant tin opener. "Thank God I was the only one in the car as normally I give my boyfriend a lift home. It was the most frightening experience of my life. When I saw the damage to the car it brought it all home to me. I couldn't believe I came out of that crash alive, let alone unharmed."

Inspector Derek Smith, of Sussex Police, said: "It must have been absolutely terrifying for her. It was an incredible escape."

Minder at whom Churchill scowled

By ALAN HAMILTON

THE former chief bodyguard to Sir Winston Churchill has been found dead after a fire at his home in Ringwood, Hampshire, thought to have been caused by a faulty fan heater.

Kingston Pennell, who was 91, headed Churchill's personal security team, which was recruited from Scotland Yard during the latter years of the war. In an interview in the late 1940s, after he had retired from the post, Captain Pennell, a former army officer, recalled: "Winston never smiled at me once, but he used to scowl in my general direction every morning."

Churchill was often moody and mercurial, depending on the time of day and the progress of the war. In a partic-

ularly good humour during a wartime conference in Quebec, he watched with amusement as another of his bodyguards fell out of his canoe into a freezing lake. "What are you trying to do, Thompson, commit suicide?" he shouted across the water with obvious mirth.

With the return of peace, Pennell retired into relative obscurity, emerging only once, eight years ago, to settle a debt of honour by paying a Churchill's poll tax bill. He paid £337 to the youngest recruit in the regiment, because, he explained, a Nepalese soldier had once saved him from being shot by a British sentry in 1943, when he forgot a password.



Sinn Fein is living in past, says RUC chief

BY MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

ON THE otherwise blank television screen in Ronnie Flanagan's office at RUC headquarters were the words: "All Quiet". Elsewhere in the United Kingdom that message would suggest tranquillity. In Northern Ireland it suggests constant vigilance and invites the subconscious postscript: "For the moment".

Even as the Chief Constable talked to *The Times*, his officers were working hard with their Irish counterparts to thwart an "imminent" attack by the dissident Continuity IRA (CIRA) on an unknown target in Northern Ireland over Christmas.

Ten late-night explosions were heard recently in the border area of south Armagh and Co Louth, suggesting that bombs or mortars were being tested. Mr Flanagan said that CIRA was getting help from the Real IRA, the splinter group responsible for the Omagh bomb and ostensibly now on ceasefire. The dissidents numbered dozens, but posed a "significant threat" to the province's delicate peace.

The IRA and loyalist paramilitary organisations posed more general threats. Their ceasefires were "intact". They had greatly reduced their level of activity, but "have not reduced their ability one iota. If they decided to end their cessation of military operations they would be very capable of

murder and damage on a wide-scale basis." The other threat faced by the RUC is Sinn Fein's all-out campaign for the force's disbandment at a time when Chris Patten's commission is studying the future of policing in Northern Ireland. Decommissioning apart, there is at present no more sensitive or divisive political issue in the Province.

Mr Flanagan deplored Sinn

'Young Catholics must be encouraged to join police'

Fein's tactics. He accused its supporters of luring his officers into nationalist areas with hoax calls and then attacking them "in the hope we might somehow be portrayed by them as over-reacting". He said Sinn Fein was "orchestrating" the commission's public meetings to give the impression of overwhelming opposition to the RUC. He cited Sinn Fein's recent sabotage of Donegal Celtic's football match against the RUC, and its picketing of a new RUC post in a Belfast shopping centre, as examples of how, "yet again, everyone is out of step except Sinn Fein".

Such conduct should be "outrageously condemned", he said.

If Sinn Fein really wanted a better future "we need to move away from slogans and graffiti

and living in their distorted view of the past".

He flatly rejected Sinn

Fein's call for former paramilitaries to be recruited into a new police force: "I simply could not envisage myself working in a policing organisation alongside those convicted of terrorist crimes."

He also denounced the "cleverly constructed myth" that there were grounds for comparison between the RUC — described by republicans as unionism's military arm — and the paramilitary organisations. People joined the RUC, and reluctantly carried guns, to protect lives. People joined loyalist and republican paramilitaries to murder. The Troubles were "a struggle between good and evil", not

two sides with equal validity. Mr Flanagan believed, however, that the commission would know "exactly what weight" to attach to extremist views, and that the RUC's disbandment was "not remotely a feasible proposition". He was "confident the RUC's record in providing a decent service to everyone in the community will stand up to scrutiny".

He acknowledged that the

RUC had made "many mistakes" but insisted it had learnt from them. It was constantly studying other forces for ways to police a divided society better.

The overwhelmingly Protestant RUC was now making strenuous efforts to recruit more Roman Catholics and create a neutral working environment. Recruits no longer had to swear allegiance to the Queen. The Union flag was no longer flown at the training centre, or on every public holiday. Officers now took cultural awareness courses.

He would change the force's name or insignia if that was the public's wish, but doubted it was. But really to alter the force's composition, nationalist "opinion formers" would have to begin encouraging young Catholics to join.

Mr Flanagan had no evidence of any of the 225 terrorist prisoners freed since September returning to violence. Personally, he had "great difficulties" with the release of men his force had worked so hard to convict, and who had killed or injured so many of his officers, but professionally accepted the necessity.

He remained confident that the Omagh bombers would be caught, but "in a liberal democracy, with such high standards of evidential proof... there's always a risk that perpetrators can evade justice".



Ronnie Flanagan: "the RUC's disbandment is not remotely a feasible proposition"

Hunt for abducted pair after phone tip

BY MARTIN FLETCHER

POLICE searched under an embankment in West Belfast yesterday for the remains of two men who were abducted and killed by the IRA in 1978.

RUC officers broke up concrete steps after scanning the ground for areas of disturbance, with sophisticated equipment, on Saturday. Nothing was found, but the search continues.

The hunt for the remains of John McCloy and Brian McKinney began after an anonymous call to a confidential line set up in September by the families of the "disappeared". Mr McCloy, who was 18, and Mr McKinney, who was 22, disappeared after a brush with the IRA over a theft at a republican club.

At least a dozen people, mostly Roman Catholics, were spirited away by the IRA during the 1970s for alleged transgressions. This year the IRA admitted responsibility for some of the disappearances and said it had appointed a senior officer to locate the remains.

Mr McKinney's mother, Margaret, said yesterday: "The search gives me some hope. I want to be like every other mother of victims of the Troubles — to have a grave that I can visit and tend."

Prescott rejects closer links with Lib Dems

BY JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

JOHN PRESCOTT reiterated yesterday that he did not support closer collaboration with Labour with the Liberal Democrats, and ruled out sitting in a Cabinet with their leader, Paddy Ashdown.

The Deputy Prime Minister, who has always been sceptical of co-operation between the two parties, indicated that there was no need to go beyond the agreement to work with the Liberal Democrats on constitutional change. He pointed to Labour's large Commons majority as making reliance on the Liberal Democrats unnecessary.

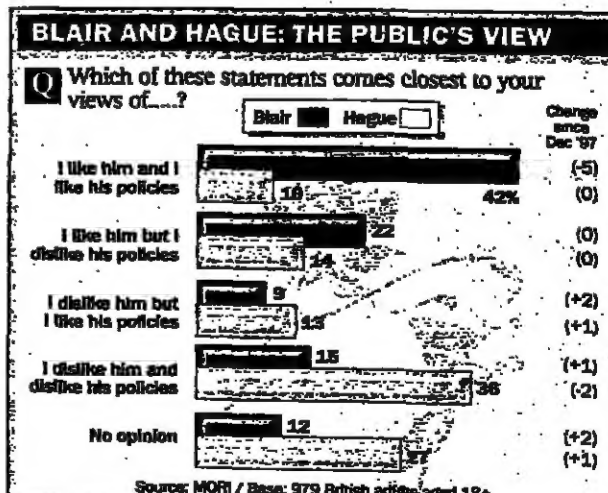
Mr Prescott's comments were at odds with the recent announcement that the Liberal Democrats and Labour would work together on a number of other issues such as health, education and Europe. Asked on BBC's *Breakfast* whether there was a danger that Labour would get too close to the Liberal Democrats, Mr Prescott said: "No, I am not a great fan of it myself, but I think with a majority of 179 you get on with delivering the promises and the job."

He conceded that the Prime Minister had pledged to work

with the Liberal Democrats on constitutional reform, but pointed out that Labour was a separate party. "Tony has made that clear — we'll be fighting as a separate party at the next election. I've always been that way; I'm not a great man for coalitions."

Asked whether he might nevertheless end up serving in a Cabinet with Mr Ashdown, Mr Prescott said bluntly: "Not the way I have described it." Mr Prescott's words and his deliberately dismissive tone underline tensions in the Cabinet over electoral reform. Some ministers feel that they should honour Labour's manifesto pledge to hold a referendum on electoral reform for Westminster — a promise designed to keep the Liberal Democrats on board. Mr Prescott is part of a Cabinet majority arguing for the status quo.

Looking back at the year, Mr Prescott conceded in the interview that the Government had badly managed the row over benefits for single parents. He said that Alistair Darling, who has since taken over as Social Security Secretary, had been more successful in putting the policy in context.



Tories prefer Blair to their own leader

BY PETER RIDDELL

SUPPORTERS of the Conservative Party like Tony Blair more than they like William Hague, their own party leader, according to the latest MORI poll for *The Times*.

The poll confirms that Mr Blair's personal appeal remains the Government's biggest asset. Some 64 per cent of the public like him, while just 24 per cent dislike him. However, the public is less enthusiastic about his policies. Some 22 per cent like Mr Blair, but dislike his policies.

Some 49 per cent of Tory supporters like Mr Blair, while just 41 per cent like Mr Hague. Mr Blair is also more popular among men than

women. His net rating (like less dislike) has fallen from 52 to 39 points among women, while slipping from 45 to 34 among men.

By contrast with Mr Blair's appeal, Mr Hague is a liability to his party's prospects. Just 24 per cent of the public like him, while 49 per cent dislike him. Conservative supporters dislike rather than like Mr Hague by a 43 to 41 per cent margin. However, they like his policies by a 62 to 22 per cent margin.

□ MORI interviewed 970 adults between December 11 and 14.

Blair gets it right, page 16

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Sick Branson keeps epic flight on course

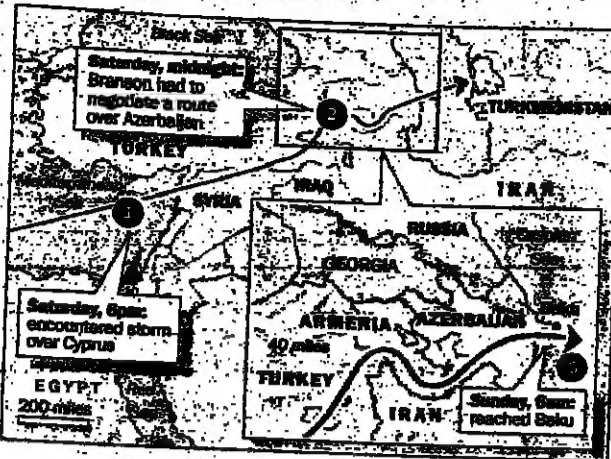
By SUSIE STEINER

RICHARD BRANSON overcame illness to take the helm of his balloon yesterday and fly it through a perilous 25-mile corridor between Russia and Iran.

The Virgin tycoon, who is suffering from dry lung and was put on a course of antibiotics, steered the vast ICO Global Challenger from midnight until dawn, saving it between two no-fly zones.

The feat left Branson "tired and emotional", according to the project director, Mike Kendrick, at the control base in West London. "We had to thread the balloon through the eye of a needle. Flying it is like driving a supertanker — it takes a long time for it to respond. We missed the tip of Iran by seven miles and then missed Russia by ten miles. I have been ballooning for 30 years and it was the most remarkable piece of manoeuvring I have ever seen. It's almost impossible to do."

Branson and his co-pilots, Steve Fossett and Per Lindstrand, were on target to fly



over India early this morning and on to the next hurdle — the Himalayas — in their attempt to be the first to circumnavigate the world.

The 270ft balloon, flying on a mixture of helium and hot air at 29,000ft, has met a series of near-crises since take-off on Friday morning. As it neared Libya at midnight, Colonel Gaddafi suddenly withdrew permission to fly over.

In response, Branson wrote a personal message to Gada-

afi, which was e-mailed from the capsule and faxed directly to the Libyan leader. Permission was finally granted and the balloon entered Libyan airspace at 1am. "It was an horrific start," Mr Kendrick said.

The ICO Global Challenger, travelling in a sub-tropical jet-stream at about 70mph, then flew over the Mediterranean to Cyprus, where it hit an unexpected storm at around 6pm on Saturday night.

Fossett, who was piloting at

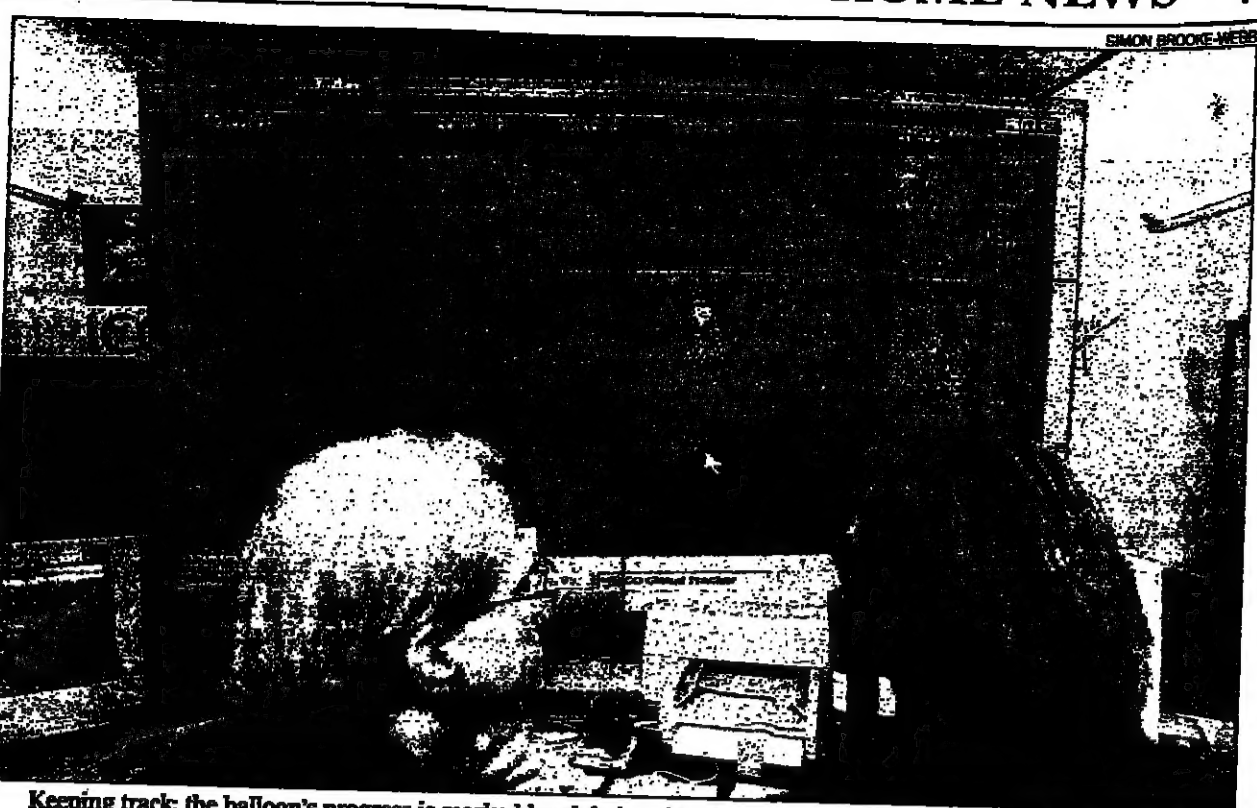
the time and whose last solo adventure saw him plunge into the Pacific in a storm, made the crew scramble for their parachutes.

Branson said in a message via ground control: "I tried to lie down and get some sleep but Steve shouted: 'Get your parachute on, there's a thunderstorm ahead.' We had to climb to try to go over it but that brought us another problem. By climbing, the winds brought us closer to Iraq."

The balloon survived and missed northern Iraq by 50 miles just before midnight on Saturday. Branson then took the helm, guiding the 15-tonne craft for more than six hours with constant advice from expert trackers in London who communicated with him via satellite link.

"I spoke to him afterwards and he was absolutely wiped out and emotional," Mr Kendrick said. "Our crisis was about 2.7 per day, but we are now hoping for an uneventful flight before our next big hurdle, which is the Himalayas."

The Virgin team has already got farther than any of its pre-



Keeping track: the balloon's progress is marked by global positioning satellite at mission control in West London

vious global attempts after three fraught days in the 10ft pressurised capsule. It has completed more than 3,000 miles of the 24,000-mile round trip and is due to land in Oxfordshire in nine days' time.

Mr Kendrick said Branson's illness has been caused by the dryness of air in a pressurised capsule flying at altitude. "He lost his voice and we

thought he might have a cold," he said. "If we get anything contagious in that capsule then we're in trouble, but there are no signs of any problem with the other two."

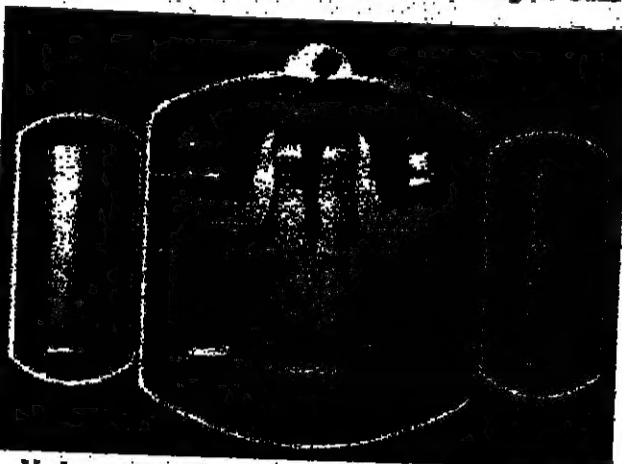
The 48-year-old multimillionaire updated his will just before the balloon took off and wrote letters to his children, Holly, 17, and Sam, 15, to be opened if he fails to return.

NET LINKS

www.icoglobal.com Richard Branson is keeping an e-mail diary and full details of his flight, including pictures from the capsule.

www.breitling-orbiter.ch Breitling Orbiter 3, Richard Branson's main rival, plans to launch later this month. Website in English and French with message board and updates.

<http://www.fai.org> details of rules for balloonists, established by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI)



Under pressure: inside the balloon's 10ft-high capsule

Even high-flyers can be laid low

By DR THOMAS STUTTFORD

EVEN in a sealed, pressurised capsule at 29,000ft, Richard Branson is susceptible to the infections that have swept European cities recently.

Patients have suffered a persistent dry cough, sore throat, laryngitis — with loss of voice, a modest temperature and a feeling of wretchedness. The infections seem to be more persistent than the usual winter cold: patients have tended to feel unwell for up to a fortnight. The effects are not as disabling as flu.

If the cabin of his balloon is pressurised to the extent of one in a aircraft, conditions will be equivalent to living at 5,000-8,000ft. At this height, air in pockets or cavities in the body expands. The increase in the pressure in the cavities in-

creases discomfort caused by any inflammation of their linings. Mr Branson's infection will therefore make him feel worse than he would at sea level. The cabin's low humidity will also be aggravating.

Few people suffer acute mountain sickness at heights equivalent to the barometric pressure within the cabin. An unlucky climber or balloonist might notice breathlessness, palpitations, tiredness and nausea, and the symptoms of a viral infection could be exacerbated. The effects of acute mountain sickness soon pass.

If Mr Branson is suffering from one of the winter viruses, it is unlikely that antibiotics will work and likely that his companions will catch the infection.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mummy mystery

Police have begun a murder inquiry after a mummified body was found in undergrowth. The badly decomposed body, of a white man in his twenties, was inside a sleeping bag in parkland near Woodbridge, Suffolk. A post-mortem examination showed that the skin was parched and mummified, indicating that the body had been stored in dry and airy conditions before being dumped in Fen Meadow park. Police are checking dental records and missing persons' registers and taking DNA samples to try to identify the body. No cause of death has been established.

Man on rape charges

A part-time disc jockey arrested by police hunting a serial sex attacker is due to appear in court today charged with another 19 offences, including four of rape and eight of threats to kill. Richard Baker, 34, of Bodmin, Cornwall, was charged with indecent assault and threatening to kill a 35-year-old woman when he appeared at Hove Magistrates' Court, London, on Friday.

Nobel laureate dies

Professor Sir Alan Hodgkin, one of Britain's most distinguished biologists, has died, aged 84. Sir Alan won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1963 with Professor Andrew Huxley and Sir John Eccles for discovering how nerve cells transmit electrical impulses from the skin to the brain. He was a former President of the Royal Society and a Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. *Obituary, page 19*

Pinochet 'out of cash'

General Augusto Pinochet's wife, Lucia Hiriart, has denied that the former Chilean dictator has Swiss bank accounts. She says his family will have to sell "the few things we have" to pay medical and legal expenses. The family is known to own several houses. A MORI poll has found that 40 per cent of Britons believe the general should be sent to Spain to face charges over crimes committed under his rule.

Christmas warms up

Christmas is expected to be one of the mildest on record. Unseasonably high temperatures are forecast for most of England and Wales. Scotland may have snow only on the hills. The bookmaker William Hill is offering 6-1 on a white Christmas in London and Cardiff, and the same on Christmas Day 1998 being the warmest of the century, beating the 15.6C (60.1F) in Devon in 1920. *Forecast, page 20*

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Lockerbie waits in hope for the tragedy to end

"THE actions of good people can overcome evil," said Bert Ammerman, an American visiting Lockerbie for the tenth anniversary of the bombing that killed his brother.

In the days after horrendous night of December 21, 1988, the people of the small town were united in their efforts to help the bereaved. Tonight they will gather again in a red sandstone church to remember the 270 victims of Britain's worst air disaster.

"The message is one of thanks and gratitude," said Mr Ammerman, a school principal from River Vale, New Jersey, and one of the leading figures in the American families' group, Terrorism Watch Pan Am 103. "This was a massive tragedy and a cowardly action."

This is the seventh time he has visited the spot where the body of his brother Thomas was found. About 30 people who lost relatives when Flight 103 exploded over the town will attend a short ecumenical service at Dryfesdaie Parish Church, followed by a cup of tea in the Town Hall.

Marjory McQueen, one of Lockerbie's two councillors, said: "It won't be a big deal, but we don't want any visitors going back to sit in an empty hotel room by themselves. We want them to know they are welcome."

The Duke of Edinburgh will attend a wreath-laying service at Lockerbie's burial ground, and there will be simultaneous services in London and America. No anniversary of the crash goes unrecorded, but this year the town has braced itself for a deluge of painful reminders. For weeks there have been more visitors than usual clogging up the narrow

Ten years on, Gillian Harris sees a town still working to heal scars of the past

streets. Many of the recent messages in the book of remembrance, in a stone hut on the hillside where the plane's blue and nose cone was found, were written with the tenth anniversary in mind.

The people of Lockerbie are hoping this will be a watershed. Mrs McQueen said: "Once it's over, I think it will be time for Lockerbie to be left alone with its own memories."

At 7pm on the cold night of the bombing, most people were preparing dinner, watching television or wrapping Christmas presents. Three minutes later, a bomb hidden in a Toshiba radio-cassette player exploded in the New York-bound plane 31,000ft overhead. It took four minutes for the broken aircraft to hit the ground, spraying wreckage across the rolling farmland which surrounds Lockerbie. All 259 passengers and crew were killed. A row of houses in Sherwood Crescent was crushed and 11 more died.

A crater, 40ft deep by 150ft long, was created by the rear section of the plane when it landed on the bank beside the A74 trunk road linking Scotland and England. The alarm was raised by Scott Maxwell, an AA patrolman, who heard a strange noise and saw a piece of plane bounce off the

wall and landed on a neighbour's roof. Mr Maxwell thought it must be from a low-flying military aircraft. He tried to call police, discovered that the telephone lines were down and radioed from his van to the AA in Glasgow.

Mrs McQueen was watching *This Is Your Life* when she heard a roar. Opening her back door, she saw an aeroplane wing hitting the ground. "I don't remember the bang. I just remember a crump sound and the entire sky turned orange."

Within minutes, people were out on the streets to see what they could do. Many headed for the doctor's surgery with sandwiches and blankets but there were no wounded. "You were either very much alive or very much dead," said Mrs McQueen.

Police, firemen, search and rescue teams and doctors spent the night sifting through the debris. They attempted to shroud the bodies in tarpaulins. Only the bodies which had fallen on rooftops and in gardens were moved under cover of darkness to avoid unnecessary distress when people opened their curtains.

The following day, 1,000 police officers and 500 military personnel arrived. Makeshift mortuaries were set up at the town hall and the ice rink to receive the dead, some of whom were still strapped in their airline seats. Their luggage, containing Christmas gifts, was spread over an area of 845 square miles. In Lockerbie all festivities were cancelled. One woman spent days washing and ironing the victims' clothing before sending it home to their families.

The victims were from 21



Lockerbie cemetery's garden of remembrance. A retired policeman said: "The ultimate thing would be to have a trial. People would like proof"

countries, including 188 Americans and 44 British. Passengers who boarded the flight at Heathrow included 37 students from Syracuse University, New York, four State Department officials, Benji Carls, the United Nations commissioner for Namibia, two engaged couples, and a family of four from Surrey.

On the ground, a teenager, David Flannigan, survived because he was at a friend's house. His parents and sister Joanne, 10, were killed in their home. The sight of the wreckage, by the way, was a relief for 28 years and had seen death in every way you could think of. It wasn't the fact it was dead bodies lying around, it was the vast number and ages of them. You could not have been human if

you had not been affected."

Some people could not believe how unfortunate the town was to be hit when it is a tiny settlement surrounded by miles of open countryside. Others said that they were lucky. Eleven residents died, but it could have been up to 3,000 if the plane had landed on the town centre.

For 364 days of the year, Lockerbie still looks to the future. "Forward — that's our town motto," said Mrs McQueen. "We have had ten years of children being born and new people moving into town. We are making progress all the time."

But for one day the town reflects on the past. For many it still feels like yesterday.

Magnus Linklater, page 16

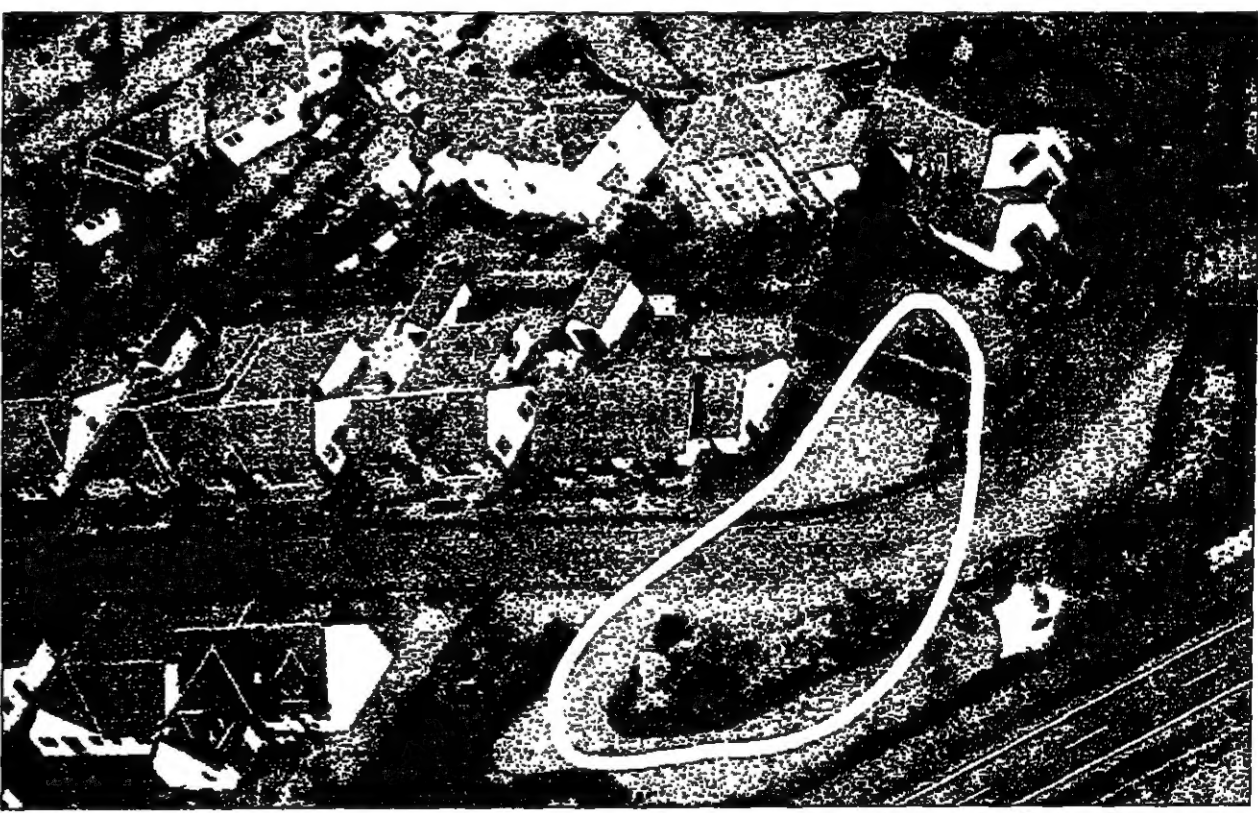
FLIGHT 103: THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE

December 21, 1988: Pan Am Flight 103 blown up over Lockerbie; 270 people killed.
Nov 14, 1991: United States and Britain accuse two Libyans, Abdul Baset Ali al-Megrahi and Lamin Khalifa Fhimma, of the bombing. Libya denies involvement.
Jan 21, 1992: United Nations orders Libya to surrender suspects for trial in Scotland or the United States.
April 15, 1992: UN air and arms embargo on Libya.
Oct 2, 1993: Britain, US and France tighten sanctions.
May 27, 1995: John Major rejects Nelson Mandela's call for trial in neutral country.
December 11, 1996: Abdul

Baset Ali al-Megrahi says he is willing to stand trial in a neutral country.
Oct 6, 1997: The International Court of Justice in The Hague says it will hear case if suspects are handed over.
July 22, 1998: Britain and US agree to hold trial at The Hague under Scots law.
December 6: Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, visits Colonel Gaddafi, the Libyan leader, to persuade him to hand the two suspects over before the tenth anniversary of the bombing.
Dec 16: Relatives of British victims say that they are hopeful the men will stand trial by the end of January.



After the night of the bombing, these ruined houses and giant crater showed where wreckage landed on Lockerbie. Today, above right, the houses have been rebuilt and a garden covers the site of the crater beside the A74



Braveheart letter will return to Scotland

By Shirley English

A LETTER from William Wallace, penned after his victory over the English at Stirling Bridge in 1297, is to be returned to Scotland for the first time next year. The Latin parchment is thought to be the only surviving relic linked to the Scottish hero.

Until this month, historians believed that it had been destroyed during the Second World War. It was discovered in an archive in Lübeck, Germany, and the new Museum of Scotland has succeeded in negotiating a temporary loan for a special exhibition on Wallace, whose exploits featured in the film *Braveheart*.

The letter was one of two sent to trading allies in Lübeck and Hamburg, declaring that Scotland "has by arms been recovered out of the power of the English" and urging them to reopen trade routes. The document sent to Hamburg was destroyed during Allied bombing. The Lübeck letter was assumed to have suffered the same fate.

It was discovered by a Scottish newspaper earlier this month, just days after the Museum of Scotland opened in Edinburgh with no reference to Wallace in its collection. A museum spokeswoman said: "We are absolutely delighted."

Space mission to the giant potato could save the Earth

By Nigel Hawkes, Science Editor

THE first spacecraft designed to orbit an asteroid was set on course yesterday. If all goes well, the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous spacecraft will spend a year studying at close hand the asteroid Eros, a potato-shaped body about 25 miles long and nine miles across.

Eros's gravity is feeble, but strong enough to keep the half-ton satellite in orbit. Near will come within nine miles of the surface, using six instruments to determine the asteroid's chemistry, mineral content, mass and density.

Later it may go even closer, possibly even landing gently on the surface and taking off again. The information gained could one day save the Earth from a catastrophic impact with an asteroid, say scientists from the US space agency Nasa.

From time to time, these things hit Earth," said Nasa's Carl Pilcher. Most such collisions are small and harmless, but if a big one hits, "all hell breaks loose".

An asteroid only six miles across is thought to have smashed into Earth 65 million years ago and wiped out the dinosaurs. Smaller ones have been linked to regional extinctions. To protect the planet, scientists need to know the density and composition of aster-

oids so they can determine how to shatter or divert them with explosives. "It is prudent for us to learn the properties of these objects if one day we find one with our name on it," Pilcher said.

Joseph Veverka, of Cornell University, the leader of the Near science team, said: "If you are going to do anything about an asteroid, then you have to learn to operate in close proximity."

Yesterday's rocket burn was the first of several needed to nudge Near into a gentle approach to Eros at a relative

speed of only 15ft per second by January 10. A final insertion burn on that day should put it into orbit.

That will complete a journey of a billion and a half miles, which has taken three years and cost almost £70 million. "This is the most critical phase of the mission, the rendezvous phase," said Robert Farquhar, of Johns Hopkins University, the Near mission manager. "We should have a very exciting three weeks coming up. I just hope they aren't too exciting."

Near was launched from

Florida in early 1996. It took a wide swing around the sun, and then made a close "fly-by" of Earth last January to pick up a gravitational boost that carried it on toward the asteroid.

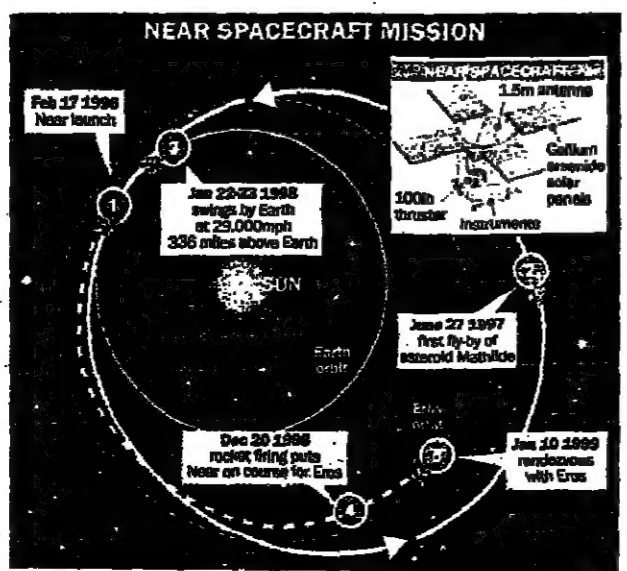
Last June, the craft flew within 753 miles of another asteroid, Mathilde. It took photographs and measurements that determined that Mathilde was a low-density object, probably a loose assembly of rubble rather than a solid slab of rock.

By the time of the rendezvous, the spacecraft will be about 240 million miles from Earth and 161 million miles from the Sun. Eros is the second-largest asteroid which lies in an orbit which occasionally brings it close to Earth.

The closest it came was 14 million miles in January 1975. It was first identified a century ago, in August 1898, by Gustav Witt, the director of the Urania Observatory in Berlin.

Conditions on Eros are hardly exotic. There is no air, and no evidence of water. Daytime temperatures are sultry enough, at 100C, but at night it plunges to -150C.

Gravity is so weak that an athletic jump would be almost enough to put you into orbit. The escape velocity is a mere 22mph, compared with 7,000mph for the Earth.



Two million more robins bob in for Christmas

By A Correspondent

ROBINS are as popular as ever on Christmas cards this year, and appearing in ever greater numbers across the countryside.

There was a small dip in the population of the short-lived birds last year, but the British Trust for Ornithology believes that the number of adult robins has increased by 38 per cent — 1.3 million pairs — over the past 12 months.

Jeremy Greenwood, the trust's director, said: "It is very good to find that Britain's national bird, the robin, is one of the winners this year."

The birds' population growth continues a generally healthy trend, but populations of some related species — such as the song thrush — are in serious decline, largely as a result of modern agricultural practices. Numbers of blue tits and chaffinches were also found to be falling.

The adult robin population was thought to have remained in the vicinity of 3.5 million pairs over the decade prior to this year's boom. The trust's new estimate was based on the number of robins caught and released in 79 places around the country, and the trust is confident that the sample counts give an accurate picture of the national trend.

NOTICE OF VARIATION OF INTEREST RATES

With effect from 4th January 1999, for both new and existing customers, the following rates will decrease to:

Mortgage Rate 7.70% per annum

100% Mortgage Rate 8.20% per annum

Flexible Choice Mortgage Rate 6.95% per annum

Royal Premier Mortgage Rate 6.95% per annum

Existing arrangements apply for Centralised Banking Services customers.

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CLINTON: THE SHOCK WAVES



The cartoonist Peterson pokes fun at Congress's impeachment process in *The Sun* of Vancouver

Capitol is haunted by fear of hunt for adulterers

FROM DAMIAN WHITWORTH IN WASHINGTON

THE resignation of Bob Livingston, the incoming Speaker, over a string of extramarital affairs and the spectre of a slew of further revelations about the infidelities of Congressmen has brought the chill of "sexual McCarthyism" to the capital.

Politicians, reeling from a weekend of extraordinary drama in Washington, will head home for the Christmas holidays with more than the usual of the President-to-worry

about. Larry Flynt, the pornographer who uncovered Mr Livingston's unfaithfulness, promises to expose up to a dozen more of them as part of what he describes as a campaign against "hypocrisy".

The disclosure dismayed a political body drained by recent events: many could only liken to a dream or novel. Representatives had sat down to hear Mr Livingston, a widely respected man, make his closing remarks in the impeachment debate only to be hit by a completely unexpected resignation speech.

With grown men, including Tom DeLay, the Republican whip, apparently struggling to fight back tears, they then had to turn their attention to the most important votes they will ever cast. Tempers frayed as Democrats lost an attempt to censure the President rather than impeach him and the massed ranks of the party staged a symbolic walkout.

When two articles of impeachment were passed, and Mr Clinton entered history as only the second President to face a trial in the Senate, the Democrats spat furious condemnations of Republicans

and rallied behind him at the White House. Mr and Mrs Clinton may have looked like a happy couple strolling at the head of a wedding party when they emerged and he said he would never resign. But this was a surreal sight in a city consumed by rancour. Again and again politicians voiced their distress that they lived in an era of "cannibalism" and hoped that when they return after Christmas, something will have changed. Mr Flynt, owner of the pornographic magazine *Hustler*, may ensure it won't.

Asked whether he was referring to the numbers of women, or the kinds of behaviour, Mr Flynt said: "Both." He added that the magazine was working on stories about the infidelities of a dozen other Congressmen; all but one Republican.

Hustler received calls from four women claiming to have had affairs with Mr Livingston after he placed full-page advertisements in national newspapers offering rewards to those who could prove they had dallied with members of Congress.

He said he wanted to expose the "hypocrisy in its highest

form" of those who held the fate of President Clinton in their hands.

"People always lie about sex - to get sex, during sex, after sex, about sex. I totally disagree that perjury is perjury. Lying about your private life, even under oath, is totally different. But his actions have provoked fury and despair among both parties in Congress."

While Republicans called for Mr Clinton to resign as Mr Livingston had done, Demo-

crats, some of whom had accused Republicans of a sexual witchhunt in their treatment of Mr Clinton, argued that the Speaker-elect had been wrong to cave in.

"It is a surrender to a developing sexual McCarthyism," said Jerrold Nadler, a Democratic representative. "Are we going to have a new test if someone wants to run for public office: Are you now or have you ever been an adulterer? We are losing sight of the distinction between sins, which

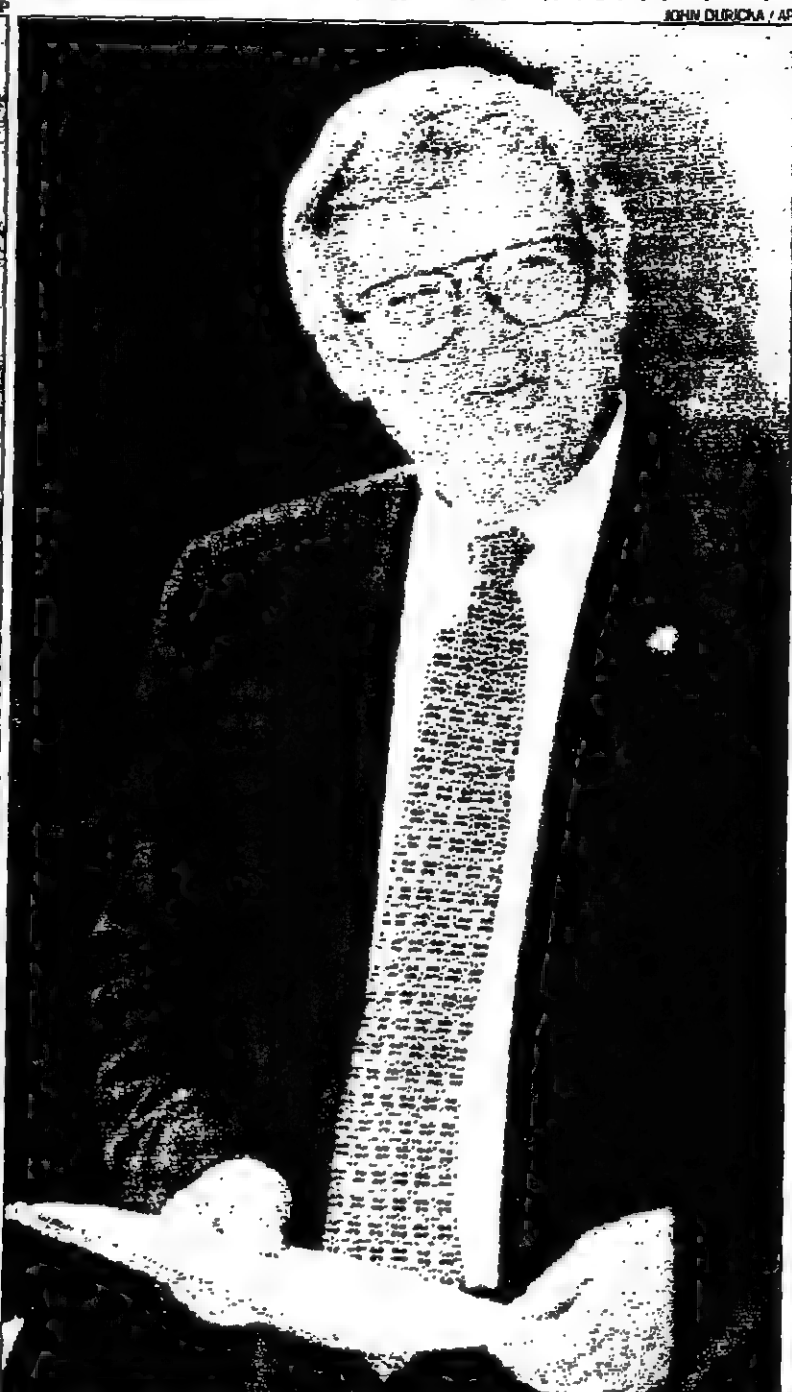
ought to be between a person and his family and God, and crimes, which are the concern of the state and of society as a whole."

Henry Hyde, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, whose own decades-old affair was exposed earlier this year, said: "Something is going on repeatedly that has to be stopped and that is a confusion between private acts of infidelity and public acts."

Many echoed his view. *Salon*, the Internet magazine



Bob Livingston, briefly the Republican Speaker-elect, gets a hug from a colleague on Capitol Hill. His mantle falls to Dennis Hastert, right



French critic scorns 'justice parody'

BY OUR FOREIGN STAFF

THE impeachment vote made headlines around the world yesterday, though most governments were silent on the political turmoil in the United States, saying it was an internal matter for America.

President Estrada of the Philippines, who has faced allegations of womanising in the past, declined to respond to questions about it, and Tony Blair said it would not be right for him to comment.

But the Prime Minister said he had "nothing but contempt" for suggestions that the US-British bombing raid on Iraq was timed to divert attention away from the impeachment.

"I find it utterly grotesque and offensive, not just to President Clinton, but to me, that anyone could suggest we would put British or American servicemen or women into action because of any internal matter in the United States of America," he said.

REACTION

In France, Jack Lang, the president of the Foreign Affairs Commission in the National Assembly, said Mr Clinton had been "the victim of a witch-hunt from another era".

The House of Representatives has "just offered the world a festival of hypocrisy", he said, adding that the proceedings had been a "parody of justice" and a "sectarian fundamentalism" that risked destabilising a great democracy.

The South Korean state news agency, Yonhap, said it was a "very unhappy day". It urged Mr Clinton to apologise for his "lies".

"It's time to show Bill the door and say hello to Gore," said an editorial in the *News of the World*.

The *Observer* said impeachment was "a tragedy for the US and the world", but sympathised with Democrats who believed that the vote was "an attempted constitutional coup d'état by the Republicans".

In Germany the *Berliner Morgenpost* called the impeachment vote "horrible theatre". The *Lewinsky* affair had "poisoned the political climate of the United States" and damaged the country's standing abroad.



It was Hillary's idea

Indecent exposure likely in the Congress v Larry Flynt

MORALS

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN NEW YORK

FOUR days ago President Clinton's staunchest supporter outside Washington was Barbara Streisand. Now it is a pornographer.

Larry Flynt, the wheelchair-bound publisher of *Hustler* magazine, thrust himself into America's constitutional crisis last month with an offer of \$1 million (£950,000) for stories of affairs in high places. As his findings leak out and his methods are condemned, the nation's "moral high ground" is beginning to look small indeed.

His first victim, Bob Livingston, can expect further humiliation when the *Hustler* exposé is published, Mr Flynt said at the weekend. He also threatened to disclose the secret life of a hitherto untarnished Republican on the House Judiciary Committee on whom "we have really got the goods".

There is more, apparently. The man who once wore stars-and-stripes underpants before a US judge has said that he has solid evidence to "out" ten more high-ranking Republicans as adulterers. Mr Flynt took to the airwaves on Saturday to crow about his investigation or, rather, to gurggle, for he has an otherworldly, frog-like voice softened by years of medication for manic depression and the pain of being struck in the spine by a would-be killer's bullet in 1973.

While denying responsibility for Mr Livingston's fall, he



The Republican Party's nemesis, Larry Flynt, centre, publisher of *Hustler* magazine

told Cable News Network: "I'm happy if my efforts have anything to do with it."

"I think right-wing bullies like him are more of a threat to our unique form of democracy than anything else."

Speaking from his elliptical office building in West Hollywood, where his top-floor suite is furnished like a 19th-century Italian brothel, Mr Flynt said his crusade was against hypocrisy, not individuals. When he said that the Lewinsky affair "still boils down to a simple issue of sex, which should be a private matter", his interviewer shot back that the million-dollar offer therefore was unwarranted. The publisher

replied: "Desperate times deserve desperate action." Raised in Kentucky and apprenticed in the moonshine business, Mr Flynt switched to hard-core pornography after Hugh Hefner and *Playboy* demonstrated how lucrative the soft-core variety could be.

For three decades he has appalled feminists and, often, his own readers with images judged to stretch free-speech laws to the limit.

One *Hustler* cover, of a starlet being fed into a meat-grinder, brought condemnation even from others in the porn business, and a long-running libel battle with Jerry Falwell, the evangelist and Moral Ma-

jority leader, took him to the Supreme Court. His victory there was the climax of *The People vs Larry Flynt*.

Mr Flynt lives in a Bel Air mansion festooned with lewd statuary and commutes to the office in a red Rolls Royce with his gold-plated wheelchair in the boot.

His investigation into Republicans' sex lives has cost \$500,000 so far, he said, and has used the services of two top investigative reporters and a team of former FBI workers.

After Mr Livingston's resignation-announcement on Friday, his nemesis said: "Several more are going to bite the dust before this is over."

Mountain of pizza means big trouble

BY DAMIAN WHITWORTH

WAGS in the White House have dubbed their predicament the "impeachment crisis". In Washington the depth of a political crisis is measured by what is known as the Pizza Index. The bigger the problem, the longer people stay late at work, and the more pizza is delivered.

In the days before the impeachment debate President Clinton's team ate themselves to a new record. Even in times of relative calm Mr Clinton and his aides display a remarkable capacity for pizza. In a normal three-day period the White House orders about \$550 (£340) of pizza from Dom-

WHITE HOUSE

ino's Pizzas, a chain with a faintly astonishing 60 branches in Washington. The previous record was set in the three days after the Monica Lewinsky story broke in January when those burning the midnight oil shovelled away \$2,600 of the stuff. But in the three days before last Friday's debate the bill topped \$3,100, with demand for "extra cheese" up 32 per cent.

The origins of the present sorry mess can be traced to the night of November 17, 1995, when Mr Clinton took delivery of a pizza in the Oval Office. The young intern who presented him with the pizza and a winning smile was one Monica Lewinsky.

Mortgages

NOTICE OF INTEREST RATE VARIATION

The following interest rates for mortgages provided by Banking Direct, a Division of Bank of Scotland, will apply with effect from 4th January 1999 for both new and existing borrowers.

Banking Direct Mortgage Rate (Variable) 7.69% per annum.

Centrebank Mortgage Rate (Variable) 7.69% per annum.

Stabilised Charging Rate 7.99% per annum.

Adaptable Mortgage Plan Charging Rate 7.85% per annum.

Banking Direct Mortgage Rate Plus (Variable) 8.19% per annum.

Centrebank Mortgage Rate Plus (Variable) 8.19% per annum.

Home Loan Rate 7.69% per annum.



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Bonn frets over leadership in Europe as Clinton is pilloried

INSIDE GERMANY



BY ROGER BOYES

Germans, like other Europeans, have been stunned at the speed with which Washington has hurried towards the impeachment of President Clinton. The new Social Democratic-Green Government had been poised to renegotiate its relationship with the United States to correct some of the imbalances that occurred during the Kohl Administration. Now Europe has to deal with, at best, a lame-duck presidency. Suddenly all the old anxieties have returned. Although the Green Party remains deeply sceptical about US power, the Government needs strong American leader-

ship more than ever before. The same goes for France: weak American presidencies can be exploited, but ultimately they weaken the authority

of European governments. The bombing of Iraq has, despite public declarations to the contrary, united continental European public opinion against America. Even the British are less than convinced. Christmas is a bad time to bomb, and the attacks on Iraq are being read as a symptom of weak rather than strong US leadership. But it is Kosovo, rather than Iraq, which will be the first test of transatlantic confidence. A Serbian spring offensive is expected and President Milosevic of Yugoslavia will be encouraged to take NATO to the brink of war. The Germans will occupy the presi-

dency of the European Union from January 1 and will be wrapped up with the intractable problems of financial and agricultural reform, handicapped by the Greens, who are reluctant to take on new Balkan commitments and unable to drum up or present a unified European position. They will wait, as before, for an American lead on Kosovo. Yet a President so fatally debilitated would be dangerously exposed if he were to embark on a Balkan offensive so soon after the Iraqi strikes: not so much *Wag the Dog* as *Dr Strangelove*. It does not take much to flush German worries to the

surface. The new year will bring a Russian succession crisis at a time when Germany is intimately involved with the Russian economy. Ruhr-gas, Germany's chief energy distributor, has just bought into the giant Russian gas producer, Gazprom, for about £220 million which will go towards easing the Russian deficit. Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor, has made a point of shifting the focus of German-Russian relations away from President Yeltsin but there is no doubting the panic that will radiate from Russia into Europe when Mr Yeltsin goes.

Crises in Russia and Kosovo, Europe in a tangle about its institutional future, the introduction of the euro and faltering economies will all come to the fore. Add to this an inward-looking America, bewildered by its own domestic problems, and the final year of this century will be one of political despondency. The German political class has undergone a remarkable transformation since the Gulf War of 1991 — two worlds divide Desert Storm from Desert Fox. Then, German deputies came to parliament carrying white candles or wearing armbands to mourn dead Iraqis.

Only when President Saddam Hussein threatened Israel, and when it emerged that German firms had helped to build his poison gas plants, did the mood swing. The Greens modified their pacifism and, thanks to Saddam, moved closer to becoming a party of government. Today the Greens are biting their lips: there is little public protest against the attacks on Iraq but a sense of unease. The Greens changed their spots because Saddam was identified with Hitler, but they are having problems repressing their natural anti-Americanism. The German Government wants an anti-

nuclear component built into the new Nato strategy document being prepared for April and it wants United Nations approval for every armed action abroad. Both these policy proposals are seen as restraints on American power. Before President Clinton steamed into such troubled waters, the Red-Green Government had other plans to redress the transatlantic balance. Helmut Kohl was seen as Bill Clinton's poodle. Herr Schröder regarded himself more as a terrier, stubborn, but ready to fight if necessary. Now the master has swallowed his whistle and Europeans are starting to fret.

Beijing sends top rebel into US exile

FROM JAMES PRINGLE IN BEIJING

IN THE midst of a harsh new political crackdown, Beijing will today put on trial for "subversion" the best-known human rights dissident still active inside China, just 24 hours after an ailing labour reformer was released on "medical parole" and flown to the United States.

Xu Wenli, 55, a veteran dissident who last summer joined others in trying to form the Democratic Party to challenge the Communist Party's monopoly on power, will be tried amid heavy security in Beijing on the day after the departure of Liu Nianchun, 50, the rights activist.

Mr Liu, a novelist and former factory worker, is the third dissident to be freed on medical parole — his wife says



Liu Nianchun, left, exiled dissident, with Xu Wenli

he has intestinal problems and high blood pressure — and forced into exile since November last year when Wei Jingsheng, the veteran activist, was released to be followed by Wang Dan, the Tiananmen Square student leader, earlier this year. Their departures to

the United States relieved the Chinese leadership of persistent irritants and their involuntary exile is not viewed by analysts here as a rights concession on Beijing's part. Instead, such freed dissidents have been used in the past as bargaining chips to win conces-

sions for Beijing from Western countries.

Some dissidents here said that Mr Liu's release yesterday — he was driven straight to the airport from prison — was probably intended as a diversion to the other prosecutions currently taking place.

A veteran of the 1978-79 democracy wall movement, Mr Xu has spent 12 years in prison for calling for democracy. Before his arrest, Mr Xu set out his ideas about the Democratic Party he was trying to form.

Mr Xu, a slightly-built grey-haired man with mild manners, does not look the part of a warrior for democracy, willing to confront the might of China's security apparatus. Yet he spent 11 years in solitary confinement for "illegally organising a clique to overthrow the Government" — effectively, calling for political rights.



Renault's first model, the Voiturette, climbs Rue Lepic in Montmartre at the weekend, marking the centenary of Louis Renault's drive along the same Paris street at the wheel of his first car. He ended his 1898 trip with 12 orders

HSBC Midland Bank Interest Rates

Advice of interest rate changes for personal customers from 22 December 1998

Rates for Savers

High Interest Savings Account 60 days notice (Annual interest option)	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98	High Interest Savings Account 60 days notice (Monthly interest option)	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98
	Gross	Gross		Gross	Gross
£100,000 +	6.33%	5.85%	£100,000 +	6.18%	5.70%
£50,000 +	6.05%	5.59%	£50,000 +	5.89%	5.42%
£10,000 +	5.95%	5.45%	£10,000 +	5.80%	5.32%
Up to £10,000	5.75%	5.25%	Up to £10,000	5.61%	5.13%

Midland Instant Access Savings (Annual interest option)	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98	Midland Instant Access Savings (Monthly interest option)	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98
	Gross	Gross		Gross	Gross
£50,000 +	5.50%	5.00%	£50,000 +	5.37%	4.89%
£25,000 +	4.65%	4.15%	£25,000 +	4.56%	4.08%
£10,000 +	4.20%	3.70%	£10,000 +	4.13%	3.64%
Up to £10,000	4.00%	3.50%	Up to £10,000	3.93%	3.45%

Deposit Account 7 days notice (No longer sold)	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98	Tessa and follow-up Tessa (Annual Tax Free interest)	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98
	Gross	Gross		Tax free	AER/Tax free
£50,000 +	5.44%	4.99%		6.80%	6.80%
£25,000 +	4.61%	4.12%			
£10,000 +	4.16%	3.67%			
Up to £10,000	3.97%	3.48%			

Bank Accounts

Student Bank Account	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98	Midland Bank Account	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98
	Gross	Gross		Gross	Gross
	1.49%	1.00%		0.40%	0.25%

16 - 19 Year Old Account	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98	Meridian Bank Account	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98
	Gross	Gross		Gross	Gross
	1.74%	1.25%		3.45%	3.21%

Livestash	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98	Up to £2,000	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98
	Gross	Gross		Gross	Gross
	3.93%	3.45%		1.99%	1.00%

Secured Borrowing

HomeOwner Reserve	Old Rate	New Rate from 22 Dec 98
	APR	APR
	11.80%	11.30%

Base Rate 6.25% effective from 10 December 1998

HSBC is the trading name of Midland Bank plc

Gross: The rate before the deduction of tax, applicable to savings.
AER (Annual Equivalent Rate): A national rate which illustrates what the gross rate would be if interest was paid and compounded each year.
Tax Free: Tax Free means that interest is not subject to income tax.
All rates are correct as at 22 December 1998 but may vary in the future.

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Peace monitors in Kosovo fear for safety after attack

FROM TOM WALKER IN PRISTINA

THE senior international official in Kosovo, William Walker, has said that he fears for his safety and that of his 2,000 monitors after his bodyguards were attacked by a drunken Serb policeman.

The American, who is trying to defuse tensions after a depressing week during which the conflict has spread to urban areas, admitted at the weekend that he no longer trusts promises made by the Yugoslav Government to the mission of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) that he heads.

Earlier on Saturday, Mr Walker had hurried to his residence after hearing that three men, one of them brandishing a pistol, had threatened his unarmed ethnic Albanian bodyguards. After hearing unsatisfactory explanations from local police chiefs, Mr Walker was still waiting outside his house when his bodyguards identified their assailant.

"When I approached him I noticed that he had a weapon and various other arms, and that he was clearly intoxicated," said Mr Walker. "Nonetheless he identified himself as a member of the police."

Later Mr Walker held talks with Yugoslav government officials, whom he said were "essentially embarrassed at how badly their assurances were undermined".

However, the Yugoslavs are adamant that the ambassador cannot have an armed bodyguard. "They tell me that I can take armed police with me," he said. "After today's event, I am not very confident that would increase my security."

The drunken policeman was driven away by colleagues, his face covered by a hood.

The OSCE has faced bitter criticism in the Serb press that it is favouring the Albanians in the Kosovo conflict. After six Serb youths were shot dead by gunmen, presumed to have been Albanians, in a bar in Pec last Monday, a Serb deputy mayor was abducted and killed in Kosovo Polje, just outside Pristina, on Friday.

Mr Walker has condemned the incidents, but has questioned the hasty arrests of several Albanians in the Pec area, who have already been labelled by the state press as the perpetrators of the bar massacre. "I guess I'm getting used to a different vocabulary here," Mr Walker said.

In the southern town of Prizren, British monitors are watching 16 major mosques in an effort to avoid any clashes between police and worshippers during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Over the weekend, the same monitors helped to return the bodies of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) guerrillas, killed on the Albanian border last week, to their families.

Protection call: Serbs in Kosovo Polje said yesterday that they would demand the return of security forces that were withdrawn under the threat of Nato airstrikes in October to protect them from attacks by ethnic Albanians.

Several hundred Serbs occupied a cultural centre in the town, which has a 90 per cent Albanian majority, to call for protection from Belgrade after the murder of the deputy mayor, which they blame on ethnic Albanian guerrillas.

"We'll demand the return of the police and the undertaking of all possible actions to ensure our safety, notwithstanding the international community's views," the Tanjug state news agency quoted the town's mayor as telling the group of demonstrators. (Reuters)

DNA clue to Calvi 'murder'

FROM JOHN PHILLIPS IN ROME

PATHOLOGISTS examining the exhumed body of Roberto Calvi, the Italian financier, have found previously undetected signs of bruising on his wrists and two separate genetic DNA imprints on his underwear, his son Carlo said yesterday.

The Italian experts, who carried out the tests to attempt to determine if "God's banker" had been murdered or committed suicide before being found hanging from Blackfriars Bridge in London in 1982, did not confirm or deny the information, which Carlo claimed heightened the suspicion that his father was assassinated.

The banker's body was taken under police escort on Saturday and buried at the Calvi family chapel in the northern town of Trecento. It had been recovered from another vault in the village of Drezzo by authorities on Wednesday.

The outcome of the exhumation, ordered after Mafia informers indicated Calvi was killed because he knew too much about the mob's money-laundering, is not expected for three months.

Fighting faulty gene of dementia

BY IAN MURRAY MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

CAROL JENNINGS knows she has a 50 per cent chance of developing Alzheimer's disease before she is 60. She comes from one of the 20 or so families with a faulty gene that is now known to be linked to the illness.

Her father died of Alzheimer's. So did four of his nine brothers and sisters. All five of them developed the disease before they were 55, and in 1985 this sad fact prompted Mrs Jennings to write to St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, asking if there might be a gene that was to blame.

In 1991 researchers there discovered that members of her family with the disease all had the same genetic fault on chromosome 21. This fault leads to the creation of high levels of the protein that forms the plaques and nerve cell tangles that occur in Alzheimer's.

The discovery that she might have inherited the faulty gene posed a problem for Mrs Jennings. She could take a test, but that would mean having to tell her children that they might have it as well. She was worried that the information might make it impossible for them to obtain a

mortgage or insurance policy. She decided not to find out but to go for regular testing to monitor for signs of the disease. Having watched her father deteriorate for years, she

knows what will happen to her if she has inherited his gene. Her family's faulty gene is responsible for only about 1 per cent of Alzheimer's cases, but it causes the same kind of

destructive excess protein build-up that occurs in all patients. Researchers are looking for other common factors that might help to identify those in danger of developing the disease. They could then take preventive measures by changing their lifestyle, or drugs might be designed to stop the protein build-up.

At best, the drugs currently available can delay the effects of the disease. They do not work on everyone and cost about £10,000 a year. Many health authorities refuse to pay such money for a treatment which has no apparent long-term benefit.

There is no cure because nerve cells are destroyed by the disease. There is no way of replacing or repairing them. Alzheimer's research is poorly funded. Only £10 is spent on investigating the illness per patient compared with £15,000 for every AIDS sufferer. It is in everyone's interest to do something to redress the balance, which is why the Alzheimer's Research Trust is one of the three charities in the Times Christmas appeal.

Count the number of your festive board this Christmas. One in four of them is likely to develop the disease before they die.

THE TIMES CHRISTMAS APPEAL

I wish to donate £_____ to the Alzheimer's Research Trust Appeal

Method of payment (please tick box)

☐ Cheque ☐ Postal order ☐ Credit card

Please make cheques payable to Alzheimer's Research Trust, or charge Visa/MasterCard no. _____

Expiry date _____ Today's date _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

To make an instant credit-card donation, phone 0800 444 810 (24-hour telephone), or send this coupon with your donation to: Alzheimer's Research Trust, Llanvres House, Grantham Road, Cambridge CB2 8LQ

Tel 01223 943000 for inquiries. Neighbourly charity no 1013880

PLEASE DO NOT SEND DONATIONS TO THE TRUST

How much will Christmas cost?



A fall in the cost of Christmas for the second year running has put a smile on the face of seasonal shoppers

Tactical shopping wins in battle of high street

It takes strong nerves but for those prepared to put off present-buying until the last minute, Christmas could be even cheaper. This weekend thousands of British retailers conceded defeat in their war with high street shoppers and started their January sales.

Principles, C&A and Burton have all broken tradition and joined the smaller independent stores in an attempt to shift six months of unsold stock by slashing prices by up to 80 per cent.

It comes as a desperate response to a turgid autumn/winter season where almost all retailers underestimated how consumers were tightening their belts.

January sales are always a war of nerves with shoppers. In the run-up to Christmas, prices are usually kept high so that customers pay the full price for presents. After Christmas, when wallets are empty, retailers try to shift anything

Desperation has forced many stores to start their sales already, says Fraser Nelson

they haven't sold at a discount and ideally sell up in three or four weeks.

This year, everyone seems to have got their sums wrong. The fashion industry accepts it is sitting on a mountain of clothes — with Marks & Spencer and Burton among the worst affected.

The new sales, which sprang up unannounced on Saturday, range from the teenage fashion of Etam to the most exclusive labels.

No one has escaped. Many Miss Selfridge stores did away with their normal window displays on Friday night, erecting huge signs offering a "mega £5 sale" with "1000s of bargains". And on London's exclusive Sloane Street Chris-

tian, Lacroix has put up two sale stickers offering discounts. Opposite, Tomasz Starzewski displays two modest "50 per cent off" signs in the window.

But a few shops down, neighbours are screaming for shoppers. Church's, famous for its £250-a-pair gentlemen's shoes, has put the word "sale" 45 times in its window. Its reductions are breathtaking — a £210 pair of handmade brogues are selling for £90 and £180 ladies' shoes are going for £100.

So why, then, has the mighty Marks & Spencer failed to join in? Rowland Gee, managing director of

Moss Bros, said yesterday that large firms have the advertising booked long in advance. "If you're an independent with 20 or 30 shops, you can start sales whenever you want, but for the national chains there are huge logistical problems," he says.

But shoppers need not wait until Christmas to pick up a cheap Hugo Boss shirt. Cecil Gee, owned by Moss Bros, is offering 60 per cent reductions and Boss shirts are reduced from £79 to £39. Its cashmere overcoats are down from £399 to £399. Yves Saint Laurent suits are down from £299 to £199.

For retailers, the worst is yet to come. Senior fashion industry leaders fear that the sales will drag on for weeks.

The head of one major fashion chain says: "For us, it could be a bloodbath. Consumers grow to expect the low prices and when we eventually finish the sales, they will refuse to pay full prices."

Only the strong-willed are capable of looking at their credit-card slips after a hefty supermarket shop. At no time of year is this truer than at yuletide, when financial ruin surely lurks in bottles of tawny port and imported, ready-peeled chestnuts.

Thankfully there is good cheer on this front. For the second year running there has been a fall in the cost of Christmas. Last year the "average family" made a £9 saving. This year they have another £2.52 to put in the piggy bank.

This is the first time the cost of Christmas has fallen in two successive years in the past quarter century. The "big four" supermarkets — Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda and Safeway — say the drive to win customers has meant prices have remained more or less stagnant against normal inflation of 3 per cent.

For 25 years now The Times has recorded the cost of the family Christmas, which has almost invariably risen thanks to a formula devised by a Conservative MP who went on to become Minister for Consumer Affairs and chairman of the National Consumer Council. Sally Oppenheim, then Conservative MP for Gloucester, now Baroness Oppenheim-Barnes, used it in 1977 to claim that the cost of Christmas had doubled in four years under a Labour Government. It probably didn't occur to her that one day it might show how new Labour had made Christmas cheaper.

Now the longest established Christmas price index calculated in Britain, it shows that the cost of the average family's festivities works out at £207.68. The index peaked under the Tories in 1996 at £219.50.

Particularly punishing increases had to be paid this year for the Christmas tree (up £1), nuts (up 50 per cent), Brussels sprouts (up almost by half), tree lights and crackers (up £2 each) and beer (almost doubled in cost). Parcel post was more expensive, too.

Conversely, we found Christmas cake, potatoes, chocolates, tinsel, brandy and cards all cheaper than last year, and there were more savings on toys and games.

The items on our shopping list unchanged in price since last year included the turkey, a bottle of whisky and the postage on the Christmas cards.

The price of the seasonal shopping basket has fallen again. Robin Young reports

COST OF CHRISTMAS				
	1978	1992	1997	1998
Turkey, 14lb fresh	£7.06	£13.86	£18.90	£18.90
Mince pies, 6	12p	59p	75p	79p
Christmas pudding, 1½lb	34p	£2.82	£3.26	£3.48
Christmas cake, 40oz	90p	£4.50	£9.47	£8.98
Brussels sprouts, 1½lb	12p	52p	67p	94p
Potatoes, 3lb	7p	30p	67p	54p
½lb of chocolates	40p	£1.49	£2.48	£1.49
Assorted nuts, ½lb	17p	49p	56p	99p
Christmas tree, 5ft	60p	£25.00	£8.99	£19.99
Tree lights	99p	£6.99	£4.99	£6.99
Tinsel	60p	£1.45	£1.99	£1.25
Christmas crackers	49p	£4.49	£3.99	£5.99
Bottle of gin	£2.48	£8.00	£7.79	£7.99
Bottle of whisky	£2.39	£8.95	£8.99	£8.99
Bottle of brandy	£4.44	£9.59	£9.49	£9.18
Pint of beer	19p	89p	85p	£1.85
24 Christmas cards	60p	£2.46	£3.49	99p
5 sheets wrapping paper	15p	59p	£1.99	£1.35
Postage, first class x 24	84p	£8.00	£6.24	£6.24
Toys and Games	£10.95	£81.18	£101.21	£88.36
Parcel post, 4 x 2kg	£1.08	£13.00	£13.40	£14.80
Total	£94.88	£193.93	£210.50	£207.68

Despite its pedigree, the basket of items chosen is weird in several respects. The "average" family insists on fresh turkey, at £1.35 a pound this year, though most turkeys are sold frozen, in which form they cost a mere 49p a pound.

The average family's turkey also apparently goes unstuffed, and without trimmings. The index does not make mention of bacon, chipolata sausages or cranberry sauce. There is no smoked salmon, let alone oysters or caviar, and no brandy butter, cream or even rum sauce to go with the pudding. The family buy no videotapes, CDs or theatre tickets, and apparently give no Boxing Day tips.

The family are also expected to survive Christmas without a single satsuma, clementine or any other fresh fruit. They drink not a drop of wine, and consume only a single pint of beer though they dispatch no fewer than three bottles of spirits. Perhaps it is because they are inebriated that they send all their Christmas cards by first-class post.

When first calculated in 1973 the total cost of providing a married couple and two chil-

dren with all the trimmings itemised in the list was said to amount to just £34.89. The 1973 prices make nostalgic, or even painful, reading.

The Times has revisited the same North London supermarket to compare prices every year since 1978. Many things have happened to complicate the calculations. Metrication and changing habits have induced manufacturers to abandon some of the weights Mrs Oppenheim specified.

This year's 1.5lb Christmas pudding, for example, is in fact one 454g (1lb) pudding with a second weighing 227g (half a pound) added to make up the weight. This year the smaller pudding had to be a "luxury" version because the shop had no standard puddings in the half-pound size.

Similarly the huge difference in price in the Christmas tree is explained because this year the supermarket is selling only the more expensive Nordman firs in the 5ft size. To add insult to injury, even they are £1 more expensive than last year.

Where equivalents for Mrs Oppenheim's specifications are no longer available, it is assumed for the purpose of the calculations that the average

family have no choice but to buy the nearest alternative. This year, for example, they have again had to buy a roll of gift wrap because there were no sheets of paper in the store.

The big saving on cards was due to the fact that this year the supermarket chain has introduced a thrift line. For our modest outlay of 99p we actually got one more card than we needed.

As an "average" family, the hypothetical folk for whom the shopping is being done are not given "luxury" or "premium" qualities where more basic is offered. But this year's mince pies are "deep-filled", though the shop offered "shallow" pies at 49p. The shop had no mince pies described as ordinary, standard or average-filled.

Half-pound boxes of chocolates did not exist in the shop last year, but have made a welcome return. If the family could have afforded 900g of Quality Street they would have been rewarded with 27g (half a pound) of Dairy Box free. Instead they were able to buy a half-pound of Milk Tray. The three bottles of spirits are the supermarkets' own labels, but all are 5cl smaller than in 1973 when the standard bottle was still 75cl.

The solitary pint of beer is more expensive because it was a 550ml bottle of premium ale (18ml short of a pint in fact), but then one hears that often happens in pubs too. The shop no longer sells cheaper beers in anything but four or six packs.

As always it would be possible to buy many of the goods more cheaply from discount stores or market stalls. Toy prices, in particular, vary widely.

Only one of the toys and games in the selection priced in 1978 is still on sale (and that has only returned this year having been missing for the past 15), so we priced an up-to-date selection. The sum we spent is rather less than the estimated national average per child, but is supposed to buy presents for two. Even so expenditure on toys, up eightfold since 1973, has shown one of the most rapid escalations in the list. The most punitive price increase of all is that of the Christmas tree, which has multiplied by 33 times over the 25 years.

Among the most stable prices are those of the cards, up only 39p in 25 years, and the spirits, especially the brandy which has little more than doubled over the quarter-century.

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Discover the magic of digital photography this Christmas and take photos, which can be loaded into your PC, manipulated, incorporated into your work, printed or e-mailed to your friends!

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Maverick who



Far Left: Blue velvet embroidered dress, from a selection starting at £130. Blue choker, £165
Left: Green embroidered jacket from a selection starting at £200. Lilac top from a selection starting from £90. Orange skirt from a selection starting at £165. Floral drop necklace, £95
Above: Lilac dress with velvet bodice from a selection starting at £130
Right: Cream floral dress from a selection starting from £150. Neck ring with pendant, £105
Tracy Felth clothes available from Liberty (0171-734 1234), Browns (0171-491 7833) and Tokio (0171-923 7310). All Jewellery by Erickson Beamon (0171-259 0202)

Photographer: RYAN SULLIVAN
Stylist: Deborah Brett
Hair and make-up: Dirk Neuhof at Michaeljohn Management
Model: Faye at Storm
Shot at Gastros (0171-627 0222).



GIVENCHY

Givenchy



Givenchy



When you cannot be too glamorous

MORE evidence that shop openings are now the social equivalent of being received at court came when Chanel celebrated its new shop in Sloane Street with a modest party for 600 (and that, the PR said, was after the guest list had been ruthlessly pruned).

Meg Matthews and Fran Cutler, her business partner, proved that their company really does exist and isn't merely a front for long champagne lunches and endless shopping trips, by organising the proceedings. This seemed to consist mainly of Fran periodically instructing the club DJ to turn up the volume — which had been sending the more mature Middle Eastern guests scuttling up to the top floor — but did at least ensure that no one in the vicinity was unaware that a *bona fide* fashion happening was under way.

What the party showed was that while there is usually a fear at many events of overdressing, you cannot be too glamorous when celebrating the dawn of a designer boutique. Feathered head-dresses, floor-length Dolce & Gabbana, chiffon and sparkly Chanel cocktail dresses were all on display.

If nothing else, fashion parties around this time of year are useful for crystallising whatever extremes are going on to a less or greater degree throughout the country.

■ WHILE the ladies who shop combed their wardrobes

FASHION DIARY
By Lisa
Armstrong

for silk and sequins at Chanel, the crowd who checked out the cluster of Dutch designers being launched at a bar in the hip Hoxton Square area went into underdrive. Holland, as most fashionistas now know, is the new Belgium (ie, desperately intellectual in its fashion approach: conjure up jackets with 27 sleeves and you're getting there).

Viktor and Rolf, the charmingly serious duo from Arnhem, who took to the Paris couture their brand of atomic chic (all the clothes were designed to fit over huge neck pillows that sat on the models' shoulders and gave them what the designers described as "interesting deformities") are their patron saints and there is talk that some of the designers on show at the East London venue will do very well.

The dress code was reassuring: lots of baggy trousers, curvy cross-dressing and more expanses of pierced surfaces than one might find in the sieve department of Ikea. If this is as anarchic as things get this Christmas, I think we'll all be getting off lightly.



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Bank of
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keeps Feith in fashion



Made it in Manhattan: "I guess it proves that you don't have to be part of the fashion system any more to succeed," says designer Tracy Feith, a big hit with Hollywood starlets

There are times during a fashion show when even the most ardent observer must wonder if there are enough women in the world to wear all the clothes that bounce, waft and prattle their way down a catwalk.

When you take that thought a step further and acknowledge that the versions blurring nicely in front of you are merely prototypes for hundreds more facsimiles, it all becomes, as Tracy Feith says, "just real scary — and the answer is no, there probably aren't enough women".

This is heretical thinking for a designer, and a New York-based one at that. But if American fashion prides itself on its sophisticated urban energy, its no-colour and, please, no-trills aesthetic, there is nevertheless a little patchworked corner of it that remains pretty, feminine and resolutely light-hearted. And it is doing very nicely, thank you, which perhaps suggests that there is a beleaguered section of tough, angry-looking American females yearning to climb out of their pleated Marc Jacobs librarian grey skirts and pop on a little silk dress that makes them look like Rita Hayworth.

Two years ago, hardly anyone had heard of Tracy Feith (pronounced Pythe). Now he sells in London, Japan, Israel and Italy, and buyers for America's big department stores are used to prostrating themselves before him in the vain hope that he might, one day, consider selling to them.

He probably won't — except to Nieman Marcus because it

He hates the New York scene, yet it loves him. Tracy Feith, former surfer and factory worker, aspires to Ralph Lauren's crown

is a home-grown Dallas chain and he will always be a good Texan boy at heart. Feith, 32, doesn't like department stores. He doesn't like the fashion scene in New York either, which he describes as "horrible and disgusting".

Nor is he wild about fashion shows, so he won't be doing any more of those, thank you. "I did them once, when I first came to New York in the mid-Eighties," he says in a courteous, all-the-time-in-the-world-for-you-manner. Southern drawl. "And you know what? They were horrible, too." So horrible, they had him drinking coffee.

Before New York, no coffee. That's debauchery for you. Surely they had coffee in Sherman, Texas, the small blue-collar town in which he grew up? "Yes, but I never saw the point of it," he says. "Then I had to stay up all night for these shows."

It is a long stretch, by any criteria, from Sherman (famous landmarks: the baby-powder factory and Oscar Meyer's hot-dog plant), where he dropped out of school at 18, to (newly chic and very lively) Mulberry Street in Manhattan, where he has just opened a double-fronted store that sells vaguely hippy-style clothes and homeware to

vaguely bohemian New Yorkers. Feith did not set out to be a fashion designer. He spent his late teens working in factories, riding motorcycles and fiddling with guns. ("Everyone has them there.")

The scenario could easily have been a replay of *Easy Rider*, except that Feith, with his faintly dandyish pride in his clothes and gentle manners, could never look as mean as

sumably because when you're sitting around all day waiting for the perfect wave, time becomes a bit meaningless.

Somewhere along the line, the realisation that his customised surfing clothes were starting to attract attention and the knowledge that he wasn't entirely fulfilling his potential, propelled him back to Texas — this time to Dallas where he enrolled in art school. Even then, fashion still had not en-

"I didn't have one," Feith recalls. "As a matter of fact, I didn't have a sewing machine." Fortunately a friend (the guard at the factory (another one) in which he worked to pay his way through art school — let him use its machines at night to run up ten pieces; all for men, which the boutique snapped up.

And then in one of those strange quirks of destiny, women started buying them. So avidly that Feith decided to head for New York. Feith says: "It's unfortunate but in America, if you do fashion, you're just not taken as seriously if you do it any place other than New York." His father, who had never been there, suggested that they drive up together. Feith charmed a few senior buyers into looking at his collection and, within 12 months, was taking his runway bows as if to the manor born.

That's when things got horrible. "It was stressful," Feith says. "The people were vile. I hated that whole cycle, and besides, it seems really fetishistic to make clothes that very few people can afford or have the occasions to wear. To me, the greatest kick is just seeing someone wearing one of my designs in the street."

He dropped out, took acting classes and found himself in



Dennis Hopper. The factories in which he worked were producing clothes and not cigarettes or bullets. "Think of a really schlocky department store in England. Well, I was working on dresses for the equivalent of a schlocky store, and it was great. I learnt how to sew."

Then he went to California and became a surfer by day and a conveyor-belt operator by night. The history gets a bit disjointed at this period, pre-

coached on his consciousness, except that one course option was entitled Experimental Clothing which "sounded kinda fun".

What ensued — "esoteric pieces for men that didn't really look like what they were meant to be" — suggests that for a while Feith was the Deep South's answer to Martin Margiela. At any rate, he showed sufficient talent for the owner of a chic new boutique in Dallas to ask to see his collection.



Cream dress with black fringing from a selection from £180; red bag with beaded fringe, £145; black glove to order; black choker, £135 all from Erickson Beamon; crocheted beaded shawl, £45, from Farwick (0171-629 9161)

who insists that he wants to build his business very slowly, events have acquired a turbo-charged momentum. A few months ago, he saw a feature about his clothes on a cable TV station and was amazed to discover how many Hollywood starlets were fans of his. And he's still surprised that his clothes have a cultish status in New York and Britain.

Yet despite the classy-looking tweedy jacket, what with the ZZ Top hair and the unharmed accent, he is still a million miles from the average designer. "I guess it proves that you don't have to be part of the fashion system any more to succeed; anyway, that's what I hope it means."

He is, he says, a staunch feminist. From churning out intellectual pieces "where every idea I'd ever had had to be on show in each piece", Feith now makes conventionally pretty clothes out of Indian paisley dress silks, bright wools and embroidered past-

mina "that make women look subtly sexy, feminine, but most of all, intelligent".

In Britain, they slot right into a niche already occupied by designers such as Elspeth Gibson. Voyage. Clements Ribeiro and Antonio Berardi. In America, they appear much more radical. "There aren't many people doing what I do here," he observes.

This belief is ultimately what fuels his ambition. Asked where he'd like to be in 20 years, you can be sure Feith won't say plugging away from an itty-bitty shop in Manhattan. On the contrary, Ralph Lauren is more of a model.

"He had a kind of aesthetic that spans clothes and life," Feith says. "So, in a way, do I — anyhow, it seems to strike a chord." He blushes, aware this may sound arrogant. "Honestly, if you saw the women coming to me, it's inspiring — they're not just kids, they're successful executives who are tired of always looking tough."

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'Why I love now'

ANYA HINDMARCH
HANDBAG DESIGNER

Describe your personal style? I like beautifully made clothes that work. I am not very good with clothes that are too now, or that wear me rather than me wearing them.

What period do you love? I love now. There is so much you can do with stretch fabrics, easy care, embroidery techniques, washable leather. People don't want products they have to treat like children.

What accessory/piece of clothing can you not live without? My AH leather journal.

What are your pet hates? Must-have now items that don't last. I also hate expensive things that are badly made.

What do you think of the current fashion trends? It's OK to wear what you like, what you feel good in.

What is the most expensive/luxurious item you have bought? The most expensive thing I



buy is Jil Sander. I don't buy lots and lots of clothes, so I see Jil Sander clothes as an investment. They make me feel half a stone thinner.

What is your favourite shop? I love Elspeth Gibson's shop. Her black lace shirt and caviare beaded skirt have stood me in good stead this winter and are very easy to wear.

How often do you go shopping? Infrequently. I have three children and I work, so it leaves me with very little time. I shop when I need something or when I am on a business trip.

How important is fashion? Creating beautiful things that make people feel good is my passion.

What is your style motto? Smile — if you look happy you look good.



Hindmarch seldom shops

The test is yet to come for Blair

Next year will provide a harsher political climate, says Peter Riddell

Tony Blair walks on water. To the frustration of the Tories, the Prime Minister and Labour continue to dominate the political scene. The Blair effect cannot continue, the doubters say. But it has, despite charges of cynicism, rows over Europe and economic gloom.

The final MORI poll of the year for *The Times*, published last Thursday, made remarkable reading. Labour's share of the vote, satisfaction with the Government and the Prime Minister, remain at the same high levels as at the beginning of the year.

These ratings are unprecedented for the 19th month of a Parliament and are far higher than Margaret Thatcher ever achieved. The Tories argue that they have been doing much better in local elections, but the trends are clear: Labour still has a commanding lead.

Another reaction is to argue that Mr Blair is skilful at saying different things to different groups, but you cannot fool all the people all the time. However, repeated polls have shown that the public has never been starry-eyed or naive about the Government. Expectations have always been realistically modest on, for example, Labour's ability to hold down taxes. Moreover, people have not been ignoring bad news. The MORI economic optimism index, measuring the proportion believing that the general economic condition of the country will improve rather than get worse over the next 12 months, has moved from near balance at the start of the year to minus 30 points now.

The growing gap between this pessimism and the stability of voting intentions is because the public is still giving the Government the benefit of the doubt. Having so decisively rejected the Tories in May 1997, people are not about to switch back soon. They want to give Labour a chance to prove itself in office. Current ratings are therefore conditional. Mr Blair fully recognises the need to demonstrate that Labour can be trusted in office.

The Government would be wrong to be complacent merely because the recent economic gloom has not hit its ratings. Few people have yet been directly affected by the downturn and unemployment has only just started to rise. The latest MORI poll shows a marked contrast between the sharp deterioration since the spring in the public's view of the state of Britain and the small decline so far in their personal conditions. But that could change substantially next year when more people lose their jobs. The political risk is that Gordon Brown left himself little room for manoeuvre in his early November statement and is therefore vulnerable to charges of over-optimism.

In the longer term, as big a test will be whether the Government can deliver improved schools and health, and re-

form welfare, without much increase in people's taxes. The right intentions are there. Just look at last Thursday's inevitably overshadowed White Paper from Stephen Byers on public service agreements between the Treasury and Whitehall departments. It is a far better guide to what new Labour would like the Third Way to mean in practice than any number of pretentious seminars. More than 350 performance targets have been set. Some are specific, such as reducing the death rate from heart disease among people under 65. Others are vague, such as increasing public confidence in government arrangements for food safety. Many are fine aspirations, but, despite Mr Byers's energy, there are few convincing mechanisms for ensuring success, apart from the Government's invariable answer of inspection and monitoring.

Nor is there any punishment for failure. This is because of a reluctance to consider a more competitive structure for delivering services.

Indeed, the main weakness of the Government is its caution. That, in turn, is because of the mediocrity of too many ministers. There are few stars, or obvious future stars, and too many second-raters looking over their shoulders, as they had to do to survive and advance during the bitter Labour battles of the 1980s. By contrast, the successes are often the most unconventional and controversial figures, such as Peter Mandelson, now proving himself as a major departmental minister, and Derry Irvine, already one of the most formidable Lord Chancellors for a century.

The Government's prospects and popularity continue to depend — possibly to an unhealthy extent — on Mr Blair himself. The other big players are all in his shadow: Mr Brown, Robin Cook (now clearly rebuilding his standing) and John Prescott are all heavyweights, but with flaws, and they do not rival their leader's breadth of appeal. Not only are Mr Blair's approval ratings at record high levels, but he is personally the magnet attracting many people to new Labour, particularly among the middle classes and in the traditionally Tory South. In the eyes of many new supporters, Mr Blair is new Labour.

Mr Blair's image is therefore crucial to Labour's continued success. He has repeatedly shown an ability to rise to the occasion as Prime Minister, as during the Iraq conflict in the past week. But his real test as both a national and party leader will come when external conditions become rougher and Labour suffers electoral setbacks. Both are likely in 1999. Current poll ratings may be unsustainable, but as long as Mr Blair retains his generally sure political touch, new Labour will be very hard to beat.

peter.riddell@the-times.co.uk



My vintage Christmas

A long forgotten marque recalls love, fraud and family between the wars

What I want for Christmas is a Vandy Sporting Light six-cylinder car. It was advertised for "immediate delivery" in August 1920 by Vandys Limited, whose joint managing directors were F. and P. Vandervell, of 40 Albermarle Street, London, telephone Park 5206 (two lines). I doubt if immediate delivery would still be possible, and I would not try to hold the Vandervell brothers to the advertised price of £975, "complete as illustration and ready for the road". I am not even sure that I want to buy the car, since I am one of nature's non-drivers, but I should dearly like to see one, perhaps even be taken for a drive in one. But does a Vandy Sporting Light survive?

The reason for my interest refers to family rather than to classic car history. My father, Edmund Fletcher Rees-Mogg, was demobilised in 1919 as a temporary lieutenant in the Royal Army Service Corps. I have the letter he was sent by Mr B.B. Cubitt, the Secretary to the War Office. "Sir, I am commanded to inform you that you have been released from actual military duty from 4th April 1919, inclusive. On and subsequent to this date you will not be entitled to Army pay and allowances, neither shall any period during which you are so released count towards any gratuity, nor for non-effective benefits, nor will you be eligible for promotion during that period. You are permitted to wear uniform for one month only after the above date of release."

The permission to wear uniform for one month is for the purpose of enabling you to obtain plain clothes, and will not entitle you to use AFV35 04 (concession voucher), when travelling. Thus a grateful nation thanked its returning soldiers.

The 1920s can hardly be understood unless one realises how the returning soldiers were feeling. Most of them were surprised to have survived; my father had lost two first cousins, out of four, both of whom happened to be engineers, one at Gallipoli, the other in the last German push in 1918. Most young officers had lost confidence in the military establishment; my father could never forgive the General Staff for their failure to recognise that the trenches at Passchendaele were bound to become swamps. He thought staff officers ought to be able

to read water tables on maps. The young university men went out as young officers but returned with a democratic experience of what their men had to suffer. They often had a sense of guilt at their own good fortune. They came back deeply fatigued.

My father, though never highly promoted, had a useful technological war, of a kind more common in the Second World War than the First. In 1913 he had suffered a bad attack of pneumonia. In August 1914, when he went to volunteer, he was found to have a strained heart. That probably saved his life, and therefore mine. He volunteered to go out to France as the driver of an ambulance which had been bought by voluntary subscriptions from Charterhouse, his old school. This subsequently led to his transfer into the Royal Army Service Corps, where he became a second lieutenant and was put in charge of a mobile workshop.

He spent most of the war running this workshop. Although untrained, he was a gifted engineer, and his workshop became a centre of innovation. From its original function of running ambulances, it became the first mobile unit to take X-ray equipment into the front line. Heaven knows how he survived the doses of radiation he must have received; there were no lead aprons in those days. Later on, his workshop was attached to the Tank Corps; as, on average, the first tanks broke down every 200 yards, repairing them in the field was a hazardous affair.

When he was demobilised, my father wanted to use his engineering skills. In 1919 his mother was living in Bourne, and he became friendly with the owner of a local automobile business. They set up the Poole Manufacturing Company to make car bodies, which my father would design and his partner would construct. Both men put money into the venture, but I suspect it was always under-capitalised.

The evidence for their involvement in the Vandy Sporting Light survives in my grandmother's diaries, which she kept for at least 50 years. Unfortunately, she was not much interested in her son's business affairs; perhaps he did not wish to worry her with them.

She did, however, cut out the introductory advertisement from a motoring magazine, perhaps the *Motor* or the *Autocar*. This shows an artist's impression of an elegant four-door sports car. She dated it August 1920, and wrote on it: "Body by Fletcher Works, Poole Manufacturing Company, Dorset." This advertisement claims that the Vandy is "beautiful in design, sound in mechanism, and the finest combination of strength, speed and economical running yet attained. This car is certain to lead where others follow."

My grandmother also kept a photograph of the Vandy, again dated August 1920, standing outside 100 Penn Hill Avenue, where they were then living. There are small differences between the car in the photograph and the one in the advertisement. The photograph shows wire wheels; in the advertisement they are solid. In the photograph the headlights are mounted on the bonnet; in the advertisement they are on the mudguards. But it is certainly the Vandy.

The diary for 1920 tells another family story. My mother, a young American actress, had come to England to play a season with the Old Vic. "May 10th. EF and Ed and Rosalind and Miss Warren dance." Rosalind was the friend with whom my mother was staying; this was her first meeting with my father. "May 11th. Rosalind and Miss W. (charming American) dine here. F to work 9 to 10.30 — she and I chat — piano." "May 15th. F takes Rosalind and Miss W. and me to Stonehenge — much wind! Tea under stones." "I think they went in the Vandy, but am not sure." "May 20th. F takes B. Warren to town, lunch Lyndhurst.

tea Souming. May 28th. B. Warren comes. May 29th. Saturday. F. Fletcher and B. Warren announce their engagement."

In fact my father proposed on the evening of the visit to London on May 20. My mother found it faintly embarrassing that the actual engagement occurred looking out over the Thames at Maidenhead. Nowadays, in our less romantic age, ten days from first meeting to accepting a proposal would be regarded as rather rapid. They were happily married for 42 years.

I do not know what happened to the Vandy. The Vandervell name became important in the history of motor sport. The Poole Manufacturing Company went on for some years building small numbers of car bodies for other models. My father designed a "better" back which was then original; it resembled the bodied-back of racing cars of the 1930s, rather than the shape of the Volkswagen.

In the end, the Poole Manufacturing Company was ruined by the arch swindler Harry, he is important in economic history because the fraudulent failure of his big steel merger in 1929 forced the Bank of England to raise the Bank rate to 6 per cent; that drew money out of New York which precipitated the Wall Street crash.

Harry placed a big order for car bodies with the Poole Manufacturing Company; for a while my father thought they had solved the problem of larger-scale production; they geared up to meet the order, and borrowed money to buy new machinery. The Harry Company received the car bodies, but never paid for them. The Poole Manufacturing Company could not survive. That was the end of my father's career as an automobile engineer and car designer, at which he was gifted; it was also the end of his career as a businessman in which he was no match for the Harrys of this world. But that all came later. 1920 was certainly a red letter year for our family. There are the marriage, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren as well as the Vandy Sporting Light to show for it. I hope that somewhere at least one Vandy survives.

comment@the-times.co.uk

William Rees-Mogg

A decade in the darkness

Magnus Linklater on the legacy of Lockerbie

Even I feel a chill on this, the tenth anniversary of the Lockerbie disaster. So what about those who were there? I have friends and former colleagues who still wrestle with their demons — the images of stripped bodies on the hills as dawn rose, the blank faces of policemen as they searched for remains, the morgue in the town hall. That evening I was in the Scottish Borders attending a Christmas dinner. A call came through from my office at *The Scotsman*, and I can still remember that lurch of the stomach as I heard the news: an American airliner had crashed "somewhere near Lockerbie". Should I go there, or return to take charge of the newspaper? I then edited *Cowardice* or common sense — I am still not sure which — sent me back to Edinburgh, where I supervised edition after edition of terrible pictures and harrowing detail.

Ten years on, the worst legacy of that night still haunts us. It is, that terrorism works: international politics takes precedence over the search for justice, that for all the United Nations fine-sounding declarations, we are still incapable of dealing with tyranny. Can we honestly say that four days of bombing Iraq have stopped Saddam Hussein in his tracks? If anything, the reverse may be true.

Lord Healey's sobering assessment yesterday — that it had weakened Britain's influence in Europe and the Middle East without achieving its principal objective of undermining Saddam — rang true.

We cannot even prevent genocide, something the UN is specifically enjoined to do. As *Panorama* reported last Monday, confirming earlier investigations by the journalist Linda Melvern, evidence that the terrible slaughter in Rwanda in 1994 was deliberate genocide rather than an outbreak of tribal warfare was ignored or suppressed. Only now are we beginning to learn that delegates to the Security Council preferred not to use the term genocide at all, and concentrated instead on how to get their own troops out. The desperate pleas of those facing certain death as soon as the West's back was turned were ignored. I predict that when Mr Healey's book on these matters is published next year it will provoke an international scandal.

Now, ten years after Lockerbie, we are still attempting to identify the perpetrators of that outrage, the worst single act of terrorism since the war. Or rather, we have decided instead to find a scapegoat. The two Libyan suspects who are being sought to stand trial in The Netherlands are only bit-players, small cogs in a far larger terrorist machine. As the intelligence services of Britain, the United States, and probably Israel, know full well, full responsibility for the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 lies elsewhere. Libya was not even the prime mover. If it had been, Colonel Gaddafi would not now be contemplating the risk of allowing two suspects out of his country.

There was a time, in the year or so after the explosion, when the West was hot on the trail of the real perpetrators. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command, based in Syria, was the prime suspect, and the evidence against it was compelling. A defector from Iraqi intelligence officer revealed that the original plan was to attack an American plane was made in Tehran, and that it was to be an act of revenge for the shooting down of an Iranian Airbus earlier in 1988.

The names of the planners were in the hands of the investigating team who also learnt that some weeks before the bombing, the German police had arrested 17 members of the PFLP and had found evidence of a prototype cassette bomb. For reasons that are still not clear, the Germans released their suspects, among whom, almost certainly, was the manufacturer of the Pan Am bomb.

That line of inquiry conveniently petered out. Our attention was diverted to Libya. That, we were told, was where the hard evidence pointed, and that was where Western pressure would be applied. At least it offered a chance of exploring the evidence — and Libya, as an international pariah, was, of course, a far easier target than Syria and Iran. On the other hand, were states to be courted, America needed Syria's support in building a Middle East peace; Iran was being encouraged to abandon an ally. This was not a time to cause unnecessary antagonism.

So when and if we hear that Libya has agreed to surrender its suspects, do not conclude that the right men have been brought to justice — only that the easiest option has been taken. The Austrian satirist Karl Kraus used to perform a sketch which involved him looking for a lost key in a small pool of light. A passer-by offers to help, and, finding nothing, asks if that, indeed, is where the key was lost. "Not at all," says Kraus. "I lost it over there," and he points to the dark. "So why are you looking here?" asks the passer-by. "Because," Kraus answers, "this is where the light is."

comment@the-times.co.uk

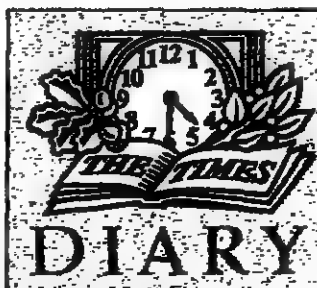
Kerb wars

DIPLOMATIC road rage has struck Belgrave. Embassies have been leaving their black Mercs in bays reserved for other embassies, and kerbside tensions are mounting: the protocol department of the Foreign Office has written to offending ambassadors. "It happens frequently," says an Armenian diplomatic sort. "We don't mind it for a few minutes, but once it had to circle my spot for 20

minutes while I phoned the offending embassy and asked them to move the car." A tit-for-tat war broke out between Colombia and Egypt earlier this month, after Colombian diplomats parked their cars in Egypt's bay. The Egyptians retaliated by targeting South American spaces. "A Colombian diplomat received a call from an Iranian Egyptian warning about his proposed action," I am told. "And he was true to his word."

Robin Cook's fusties are alarmed by this "continuation of war by other means" and are determined to slam on the brakes. "The protocol department," it reads, "has received a number of complaints. You should ask permission if you want to park in other designated spaces." I gather the sole Iraqi representative in London a chap who works under the Jordanian flag is a perfect gentleman over such matters.

My macabre American friends have a new distraction: funeral league tables. After the goodbye to Diana, Princess of Wales, garnered record ratings over there, reruns of celebrity wakes are all the



rage. Top of the pile: Frank Sinatra, followed by Sonny Bono and dear old Tammy Wynette.

Poor value

JOHN CLEESE is the most irritating man on television — official. The former Pythons has been awarded the title for his Sainsbury Christmas advert, in which he stars as a garishly clad boom bouncing around a store talking about "value for money" (the word know — the chain has reportedly paid him around £400,000 for his efforts). Marketing magazine canvassed viewers, and Cleeze won. Most were probably Sainsbury staff, who I am told dislike the ad for making them "look gormless".

• HUW EDWARDS, the BBC man who has toppled Martin

Lewis as the face of the Six O'Clock News, has one admirer at least: a woman from Sutton Coldfield, who is determined to discover what he wears under his desk. She is convinced he is clad in denim shorts and wellington boots, and regularly writes to advise him of her theory. Must be a happening place, Sutton Coldfield.

Stamped out

PETER HAIN has had to dip into his Christmas piggy bank after breaking House of Commons rules. The Welsh Minister's helpers were (legitimately) using Parliament's postal system to send Christmas cards to cronies, but party sheets trumpeting Alan Michael's bid to lead the Welsh assembly were also slipped into some of the envelopes.

Hain turned himself in to the Sergeant-at-Arms, and agreed to refund the postage. Imaginatively, he claims he is the victim of dirty tricks. "My staff were under pressure over Christmas and stuffed a few letters in the wrong envelopes," he says. "The Sergeant deals with cases like this every other day but my lapse has been whipped up." I trust he is not pointing the finger at Rhodri Morgan, Alan Michael's rival.

• PETER MANDELSON has a new friend called Billie. The important 16-year-old chanteuse (pictured left) says her ambition for the millennium is to sing in the Dome. "I'd love to do it," she told me, as I grilled her between takes on the Pepsi Chart Show. How about a duet with Mandy?

Lane, Enfield, North London — who extracted thousands of pounds from millionaires to feature in a book, *The United Kingdom Wealth Directory*, which never appeared? I fear so. Charles Kidd, the editor of *Debutty Peerage and Baronage*, says: "He is not a peer. He has just changed his name by deed poll."

Bookmark

THAT old trier "Lord de Chanson" is at it again. A letter from de Chanson, aka Craig Tuck, a convicted fraudster, lands on the drawbridge: advertising the "Address Book of the British Establishment". Would this be the same de Chanson — squire of Bullsmoor



• SCREEN idol, perhaps, but Leonardo DiCaprio (above) still finds it tricky to order a drink. During a recent flight from the Bahamas to Florida, the Titanic star — at 24 a legitimate imbibor even in America — was asked for his ID.

JASPER GERARD

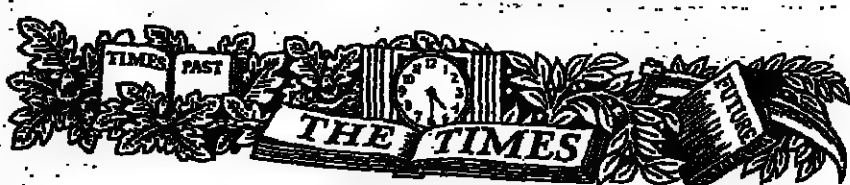


"I'm staying till the very last minute of the very last day"

A DO

It could be you

At the end of the year, it's time to look back at the year that was. It's a time to reflect on the events that have shaped our lives, and to look forward to the year ahead. It's a time to celebrate the successes and to learn from the failures. It's a time to give thanks for the people who have supported us, and to ask for forgiveness for the things we have done. It's a time to set new goals and to dream of a better future. It's a time to live.



IN THE DOCK

Only Clinton can save the Senate from a lengthy trial

When Thomas Jefferson returned to the United States from France, where he had been the Ambassador while his colleagues constructed the American Constitution, he asked George Washington why it had been considered necessary to create a Senate. The first American President reputedly poured his tea from cup to saucer and replied that, like the act he had just performed, the Senate would serve to cool the passions of the moment. It now falls to that chamber to live up to the expectations of the Founding Fathers and decide the fate of the Clinton presidency in a cool and timely fashion.

The prospect of an extended trial on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice is one that must fill even Mr. Clinton's critics with foreboding. In 1868 it took the Senate 74 days to reach a vote that retained Andrew Johnson in office. The charges Mr. Johnson faced were the essence of simplicity compared with the mountain of documentation that surrounds Mr. Clinton's alleged offences. In those halcyon days the American Government did little more than operate the Post Office, collect import duties and maintain a minuscule Navy. Washington could come to a halt without the average American noticing the difference.

A trial of anything like that length next year would be an unmitigated disaster. Yet it is difficult to envisage what either Chief Justice William Rehnquist or the Senate leadership can do to make matters move with more momentum. They can hardly dismiss the articles of impeachment brought by the House of Representatives out of hand or without a hearing. The issue of perjury is relatively straightforward: few outside the President's inner circle do not accept that he lied under oath. The real issue is whether perjury in this instance is enough to expel an elected President from the White House.

The charge of obstructing justice is much more complicated. This brings together Mr. Clinton's supposed attempt to persuade his secretary to endorse a false version of his

relationship with Monica Lewinsky, the circumstances under which gifts that he had given his intern were retrieved and concealed, and the implications of efforts undertaken to find Ms. Lewinsky employment in New York City. All of these events are open, to some degree at least, to multiple interpretation. The Senate may find it impossible to avoid calling a number of witnesses for what could be protracted personal testimony. This suggests a trial of several weeks' duration.

Nor can the eventual outcome of this exercise be predicted with absolute certainty. It has been assumed, with considerable reason, that it is unlikely that the Senate will muster the two-thirds majority necessary to convict Mr. Clinton. That forecast rests less on the fact that the Republicans hold only 55 of the 100 seats than on the Senate's reputation as a more deliberative, independent and non-partisan institution than the House of Representatives. The prospect of displacing a President over a series of misdemeanours made in a sexual context is not one that will fire many senators — Republican or Democrat — with the remotest enthusiasm.

Mr. Clinton can hardly afford to take a Senate trial lightly. He is on precarious terrain over perjury, and this is made no better by his ridiculous attempts to reinvent the English language. If he persists in this strategy then he may find that respected Democrats such as Senators Byrd, Lieberman, Kerry and Moynihan feel they have no choice but to abandon him. The sensational resignation of Robert Livingston, Speaker-designate, has changed the atmosphere in the American capital. The public might yet come to regard the President's departure as preferable to interminable Senate proceedings. Mr. Clinton may find that those who live by opinion polls also perish by them. This affair is in new and virtually uncharted territory. There is only one man, Mr. Clinton, and one means, resignation, that can bring this constitutional crisis to an abrupt conclusion.

THE FOUR-DAY WAR

Much has been achieved, but there is still more to do

Tony Blair, George Robertson and General Sir Charles Gaultie made a convincing case yesterday for the damage done over the past four days to Iraq's military capabilities. In its own terms, Operation Desert Fox has been successful. It is, as the Prime Minister indicated, almost inconceivable that the use of so much firepower has not severely disabled the Iraqi army and set back considerably Saddam Hussein's biological, chemical and nuclear weapons programmes. In 96 hours, allied air power has proved more penetrating than 14 months of interrupted and obstructed UN weapons inspections.

However, as the Defence Secretary acknowledged, the Iraqi threat has been reduced rather than eliminated. In part, this reflects proper self-restraint by the American and British Governments. Saddam has cynically placed much of his more sophisticated equipment within hospitals and schools — confident that democracies would not target such facilities. Of necessity, the allied effort has concentrated on the infrastructure of mass destruction — delivery systems, key factories and the Republican Guard — rather than the biological and chemical materials themselves. It should therefore be assumed that Saddam retains such raw potential if not the means of rendering it effective.

It is inevitable that the nature of future policy towards Iraq should become the centre of attention. The British Government has been criticised for a stance which has appeared uncertain of the objectives. The Conservatives, led by Michael Howard, echoed those concerns yesterday. These complaints are not entirely fair, for at least three reasons. First, the anti-Saddam strategy is set predominantly in

Washington, not London. Secondly, allied aims, if uncertain today, have been even more incoherent over the past 18 months as UN inspection efforts collapsed in practice but were still upheld in theory. Thirdly, there are no easy, costless, options on Iraq.

There is little doubt that Operation Desert Fox represents a watershed. For the past seven years, Western policy towards Iraq has been predicated on an increasingly implausible inspections regime. It was hoped that economic sanctions might persuade those who matter in Baghdad that the demise of Saddam would enhance their interests. And, while it would be wrong to suggest that this approach has failed, it has not succeeded either. It is also irrelevant for future planning. Iraq is unlikely to invite UN inspectors back and, even if it did, there is no reason to presume that Uniscom could uncover Saddam's vast illegal arsenal.

This means that an entirely novel strategy must be implemented. The Prime Minister has outlined its core components: the 'active containment' of Iraq which requires further bombing whenever Saddam seeks to repair his shattered infrastructure, and a much more vigorous enforcement of economic sanctions. The announced deployment of HMS *Invincible* to the Gulf early next year is an essential part of this updated formula. The United States and Britain also need to state unequivocally that the removal of Saddam Hussein is now their core objective. They must make it clear that Iraq would be swiftly restored into the international community if that happened. Mr. Blair's stock is extraordinarily high in Washington at present. He should use that influence to persuade Mr. Clinton to finish what he has started.

A DO AT THE DOME

It could be you at the party of the millennium

Forget existential angst. As the millennium approaches what will be troubling half the population is how to celebrate the onset of a new era with style. Naturally, an obstinate few will still bicker about the calendar and whether, in the absence of a year-zero AD, the year 2000 will not really be 1999 after all. These niggles may plan to stay resolutely under their bedclothes as the midnight hour chimes. But the less finicky are more concerned about having fun. And any without a Vanuatu beach hut, a hotel suite or mountain pinnacle already bagged will still be looking for appropriate modes of revelry.

The Dome may provide a solution. According to an announcement expected this week, members of the general public are likely to account for about two thirds of the 10,000 guests expected on the evening the Dome opens. The people's millennium will, quite fittingly, be launched by representatives of us all. It could even be invited guests are expected to include members of the emergency services — people charities and voluntary groups — people whose contribution to society merits recognition and thanks. But away from the ease atmosphere of family and friends, under the unfamiliar umbrella of the

Dome, will these guests find the pleasure they really deserve?

Members of the public will probably have to make a great effort to reach Greenwich on the night. Pears that the Jubilee Line extension, plagued with delays, might not be ready in time to drop visitors right outside the Dome seem justified. But driving is not an option for any who wish to drink. And once guests do turn up, high expectations must be met. After a protracted season of Christmas parties, appetites can be jaded by the time of new year. People will expect more than a glass of cheap bubbly and a vol-au-vent or two, among a throng of name-tagged strangers. Peter Mandelson and his team will have to be assiduous as hosts. Like-minded guests will want to be introduced to one another. And the famous should not be corralled away into VIP pens. The "ordinary man" may think his effort worthwhile if he can chat with his favourite Spice Girl or exchange a few words with a sporting superstar. But most of all the millennium "do" at the Dome will need some sort of theme, some structuring idea. Those privileged to an invitation should come away uplifted — and not only by enjoyment.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Lack of strategy in 'Simple' solutions to breast cancer

From Mr Michael Hill

Sir, General Sir Michael Rose argues (article, December 18) that unless the West aims at ridding Iraq of Saddam and his regime it "would do better to abandon its strategy of confrontation, and attempt a policy of constructive engagement".

Logic dictates that he is correct. The Americans and the British seem to be approaching this problem in a gun-ho manner, with no specific strategy apparently in mind. In the last Gulf War, when the Allies invaded and bombed Iraq for 40 days and 40 nights, they failed either to rid the world of the evil of Saddam Hussein or to stop him in his manufacture of weapons of total destruction.

How can we expect that a few days of intensive bombing will be more successful?

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL HILL,
27 Bathgate Road, SW19 5PW,
December 18.

From Professor Patrick Collinson

Sir, I am not sure that George Galloway, MP, would be my first choice as standard-bearer in any good cause. Yet on this occasion he is surely in the right. I have never felt such contempt and sorrow for the constitution and management of the House of Commons (reports, December 18). The action which HM Government is taking in our name appears strategically threadbare, and is certainly diplomatically ill-judged, and morally repugnant.

I know I shall be asked: what would you do? I am not sure. But not this.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK COLLINSON,
Trinity College, Cambridge CB2 1TQ,
December 19.

From Dr R. Dawes

Sir, The course of history of Iraq is unlikely to be changed by the sort of military action being displayed by US and UK forces.

The future of Iraq lies in the hands of its people. Rather than bomb Saddam Hussein's military installations, surely a more effective UN policy would be to demonstrate support for the ordinary citizens. We need to work with them and, not as they must perceive at present, against them.

We should consider combining compassion and sophisticated military technology for a new kind of bombardment. How about an antibiotic pill parachute drop; an infant formula cruise missile; or the ultimate in harnessing care and smart weaponry — the laser-guided sandwich?

Yours etc,
R. F. H. DAWES,
23 Maidenhall,
Highnam, Gloucester GL2 8DJ,
December 18.

Clinton impeachment

From Mr Henry Thoresby

Sir, In your first leader today you criticise the Republicans for undermining the authority of Mr Clinton at a time of world crisis. Surely the most serious crisis faced by the West today is a relentless tide of decadence perfectly exemplified by a President whose contempt for morality is only watched by his contempt for the rule of law.

Yours faithfully,
HENRY THORESBY,
12 Wexford Road, SW12 8NH,
December 18.

From Mr Stuart Eastwood

Sir, If it is true that Clinton cheated at golf (article, "Bill cannot bomb his way out of this", December 19) then never mind other evidence: he surely has to go.

Yours faithfully,
STUART EASTWOOD,
8 Shrewsbury Mews, W2 5PN,
December 19.

Wedding date

From Dr Philip E. Roe

Sir, Was a Royal Doulton dinner service ever "at the top of the bourgeois bride's wedding list" as your leader states ("Gone to pot", December 11)?

Surely wedding lists are a more recent symptom of society going to pot. When, exactly, did couples start to specify their requirements?

Yours etc,
P. E. ROE,
157 Verulam Road,
St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 4DW,
philip.e.roe@btinternet.com
December 12.

Sport letters, page 27

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be faxed to 0171-782 5046.
e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

London mayor's 'poisoned chalice'

From Mr Steve Norris

Sir, Whenever I have been asked about my mayoral ambitions during the last year I have always replied that I would wait to see the Government's Bill. As an ex-minister I know only too well that the devil is in the detail.

As Simon Jenkins made clear in his article on December 16, "Gordon's errand boys", John Prescott has now offered any potential mayor of London a poisoned chalice. Such powers as are transferred will be subject to control by Whitehall and, much more importantly, any money the new mayor raises from congestion taxes will subsequently not be guaranteed to be spent in the capital.

Personally I always suspected the Treasury would never accept hypothecation of revenue, and so it has proved.

In fact, the Bill has guaranteed one mayoral policy, whatever the outcome of the election. Given the prospect of taking all of the blame for introducing a new tax but guaranteed none of the revenue, no candidate will commit himself to congestion charges of any description. Thus Mr Prescott has achieved exactly the opposite of what he ostensibly wished.

Joined up Government? I think not.

Yours faithfully,
STEVE NORRIS
(Minister for Transport in London, 1992-96),
10 Alfriston Road, SW11 6NN,
December 18.

Public service ethic

From the Reverend Dr Ian Bradley

Sir, A significant and heartwarming common theme links the Government's announcements on the future of the Post Office (report, December 8) and the care of the mentally ill (report and leading article, December 9).

Both these policy initiatives recognise the importance of public institutions, a species maligned fairly consistently over the last two decades and which seemed almost in danger of extinction.

The fact that the Post Office is to remain a public corporation, and not to be privatised, means much more than just the retention of the Queen's head on stamps and the royal insignia on pillar boxes. It acknowledges the public service ethic and commitment to social as well as economic values which have always characterised this particular institution.

The belated recognition that a

greater proportion of those with psychiatric illness need long and medium-term residential care also signifies a change of attitude towards institutions. I hope that it betokens a realisation by the Government that mental hospitals, so long and so unfairly criticised for being too institutional, often provide a much more secure and supportive community than the so-called care in the community which, in reality, often amounts to a room in a steady bed-and-breakfast establishment or a cardboard box in a shop doorway.

What about some serious and practical support for other aspects of the public service ethic and the institutions which have so long supported it — for instance public service broadcasting and the BBC?

Yours faithfully,
IAN BRADLEY,
7 Strathkirkness High Road,
St Andrews, Fife KY16 9UA,
December 9.

The great sin of that system was its exclusivity. Even now, when well over a million students attend universities and colleges, it remains exclusive. The simple reason why so many young people are still excluded is that there is no room and no money for them. This is because the free-for-some arrangements were absurdly generous to people like the Balliol protesters who can well afford to make a modest contribution to the cost of not just their education but to that of others.

A good starting point for this debate would be: "From each according to his means; to each according to his needs."

Yours faithfully,
GRAHAM HILLS,
2 Holm Burn Place,
Inverness IV2 6WT,
December 13.

Balliol protest

From Professor Sir Graham Hills

Sir, The Balliol protesters would do well to consider the wider aspects of their actions which will be seen by many as yet another defence of their privileged position (letter, December 12).

It is only a generation or so since all students at British universities paid fees. These were recouped from scholarships or bursaries, mainly in the form of mandatory awards from local authorities. This procedure allowed universities to exercise considerable freedom in whom they taught and what they taught. These were the good times for universities although they catered for only a tiny minority of the population, perhaps no more than 50,000 students in all.

Tornado's blast

From Mr Michael Gordon

Sir, Claims that Arthur Peppercorn's AI Pacific steam locomotives were Britain's best ever ("This steaming blast from the past", Weekend, December 12), I think, are exaggerated.

These engines were notably free-steaming, but a design fault made them prone to excessive lateral oscillation at speed. This was a characteristic not shared by the earlier Pacifics of Sir Nigel Gresley. A briefly chilled nose poked cautiously out of a rear coach window in 1955 was enough to observe our AI driver being rhythmically swung from side to side as he sat by the cab window on a speedy descent of Tuxford bank in the East Midlands.

The late O. S. Nock (obituary, October 8, 1994), asked at a 1950s meeting in Leeds which locomotive type he considered could challenge

have change from £10.
Do tell me, what was the point of such a survey, which did not consider comparative incomes?
And can anyone explain why Italy should be the most expensive country in Europe in which to buy pizza and wine for four?

Yours faithfully,
J. MELLIN,
Meadow Field Farm,
Uley, Keighley,
West Yorkshire BD20 6HH,
December 8.

Prices beyond compare

From Mr John Mellin

Sir, Might I suggest that in any future surveys on comparative prices across Europe (letters, December 15) you include an extra column for UK (excluding London).

In this part of the country £320,000 houses are even rarer than teachers who work a 55-hour week; £29 would buy a season ticket at the barber's and four adults could enjoy fish and chips with dandelion and burdock and still

Yours faithfully,
KATE BROOKMAN,
7 The Borough,
Montacute, Somerset TA15 6XB,
December 15.

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OBITUARIES

PROFESSOR SIR ALAN HODGKIN, OM

Professor Sir Alan Hodgkin, OM, KBE, FRS, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, 1978-84, died yesterday aged 84. He was born on February 5, 1914.

Alan Hodgkin was one of the outstanding scientists of his generation. From the very outset of his career as a neurophysiologist he performed one classical experiment after another, and modern views on the mechanism of conduction of the nerve impulse are largely based on his work — work that brought him election to the Fellowship of the Royal Society when he was barely 40, a (joint) Nobel prize at 49 and which left him, at the time of his death, the second most senior non-royal member of the Order of Merit.

Alan Lloyd Hodgkin was born in Banbury, the second son of George Hodgkin and Mary (Wilson) Hodgkin, later Mrs Lionel Smith. His father, a close friend of Keith Lucas, in whose scientific footsteps Alan Hodgkin was to follow, died in Baghdad four years later on a mission to investigate distress among Armenian refugees driven from their homes by the Turks.

After five years at Gresham's School, Holt, Hodgkin went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, in October 1932 to read physiology, chemistry and zoology. Although he was not an entrance scholar, his scientific ability must have already been obvious to his contemporaries, for he was quickly elected to the undergraduate Natural Science Club, which in his case, as in a number of others, was remarkably successful at picking out a future Fellow, or indeed President, of the Royal Society.

Almost before completing the Natural Sciences Part II course in physiology, he began the experiments on cold block in frog nerves that led to his election as a Fellow of Trinity after only one year. He later described this work as "rather amateur" but, in fact, his early papers had all the hallmarks of the subsequent ones, with their direct, incisive and critical analysis of the physical events underlying conduction of the nerve impulse. One of the referees of Hodgkin's fellowship thesis, Professor A. V. Hill, lent a copy to Herbert Gasser, which resulted in an invitation to spend a year, 1937-38, at the Rockefeller Institute in New York.

During this period Hodgkin met K. S. Cole, and was introduced at the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory into the scientifically seductive but demanding world of the squid giant axon. Much of the research for which he was best known depended on a superlatively skilful exploitation of these very large nerve fibres, whose great size — their diameter is 0.5 to 1mm — enabled him to make accurate physical and chemical measurements of a kind which could not be undertaken in smaller nerves, at least until the basic principles had been established with the help of the giant axon. Thus in the summer of 1939 he joined forces with his pupil Andrew Huxley and, working at the Laboratory of the Marine Biological Association in Plymouth, first measured the absolute magnitude of the conducted action potential with a 0.1mm microelectrode inserted longitudinally into a squid axon, and made the surprising discovery



Sir Alan Hodgkin, OM, shortly before becoming Master of Trinity

that at its peak the electric potential across the membrane did not just fall to zero, but was reversed.

Because of the outbreak of war, interpretation of this unexpected result had to wait for some years. Hodgkin spent the first few months of the war working on aviation medicine, and was then engaged for five years on the development of airborne radar for the RAF. His most important contribution was the design of a 10cm scanning and display system for night fighters. He then returned to the Physiological Laboratory in Cambridge, until 1952 as an assistant director of research, and from 1952 to 1969 as Foulerton Research Professor of the Royal Society. In 1969 he was appointed John Humphrey Plummer Professor of Biophysics in the university, but retained his laboratory in the department of physiology.

Hodgkin's next major advance was made in 1947 when he and Bernard Katz showed how the generation of the action potential in squid axons and its reversal at the peak of the spike depends on a specific increase in the permeability of the nerve membrane to sodium ions. The first public announcement of the sodium hypothesis, made in Oxford at the 1947 International

Physiological Congress, was a memorable scientific occasion. There followed some work in Cambridge with Bill Nastuk, which showed that the theory could be applied to muscle as well as to nerve. Their method for recording intracellular action potentials by means of a glass micro-electrode 0.3mm in diameter at the tip thrust through the membrane was not the least of Hodgkin's contributions to electrophysiology, for the technique known as "patch clamping" is now used universally for the measurement of potentials in every kind of living cell, and across tiny patches isolated from their membranes.

The experiments, which later led to the award of the 1963 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, were begun at Plymouth in 1948, in collaboration with Huxley and Katz, and were completed the following summer. They consisted in the application of voltage-clamping to make a quantitative examination of the relationship between current and voltage in the membrane of the squid giant axon. Technically, the experiments were a tour de force, as was the mathematical analysis of the results embodied in the Hodgkin-Huxley equations describing the behaviour of the membrane in

terms of voltage and time-dependent ionic conductances.

The series of five papers which appeared in the *Journal of Physiology* in 1952 had an immense influence on cellular neurophysiology, and established a new approach that has since been fruitfully applied to many other excitable tissues. Only recently, in studies on the detailed structure of voltage-gated ion channels taking advantage of the techniques of molecular biology, has it been possible for any improvements to be made on the Hodgkin-Huxley analysis.

In the following 15 years or so the pattern of Hodgkin's researches consisted in an annual visit to Plymouth, generally in September before the beginning of university term, but sometimes later in the autumn when the squid were in better supply — with periods of acute frustration when they were not interspersed with the writing up of results in Cambridge. With various collaborators he explored a wide range of problems in membrane permeability, using micro-injection and radioactive tracer techniques to investigate the ATP-dependent recovery mechanism responsible for the active extrusion of sodium from squid axons, and internal dialysis to study the role of calcium in excitation.

Working in Cambridge outside the squid season on the axons of cuttlefish imported from Plymouth, he discovered the phenomenon of single-file diffusion of potassium ions, and using frog muscle fibres he added appreciably to our understanding of the ionic permeability of muscle membranes and of the mechanism by which electrical excitation is coupled to mechanical contraction.

After the autumn of 1970, with the prospect of becoming President of the Royal Society that December, Hodgkin brought his annual seasons of experimentation at Plymouth to an end, and turned his attention to visual research that could be pursued in Cambridge. In 1962 he had collaborated with Mike Farrant at Woods Hole on the response of single ornamentalia in the eyes of horseshoe crabs to flashes of light, and they were able to explain their results neatly in terms of a complex cascade of coupled chemical reactions.

In 1970 he embarked with Denis Baylor and others on a long series of experiments on intracellular recording from the eyes of turtles, and later on suction pipette recordings from isolated rods and cones of toads and salamanders. Subjected to his characteristic brand of rigorous quantitative analysis, these led to valuable contributions to our knowledge of the various steps initiated by the absorption of a quantum of light by rhodopsin, leading to the activation of the G-protein transduction and thence to the electrical response that is a brief reduction of the ionic current in the outer segment of the rod or cone. It appears that calcium ions are, for once, not the internal transmitter but still have an important regulatory role in the cascade.

In every project that he tackled, Hodgkin's extraordinary ability to penetrate immediately to the heart of the problem and to devise new ways of exploring aspects that had previously appeared to be inaccessible to experimental test quickly led to radically new

ideas about the underlying mechanisms. He was pre-eminently an experimentalist and always deprecated strongly the formulation of theories which lacked a plausible physical basis or could not be examined quantitatively. At the same time he was unsurpassed in the fertility of his imagination in producing radically new explanations for experimental findings, and in the rapidity with which he was then able to come up with suggestions for critical tests of their validity.

He sometimes complained of his lack of formal training in the physical sciences and mathematics, but his physical intuition and his ability to solve difficult differential equations were the envy of his colleagues. Above all, he excelled in the performance with his own hands of exacting manipulations of single nerve and muscle fibres, and in his power to extract the maximum in his penetrating analysis of the results. Even in the small hours of a winter night at Plymouth — and because of the timing of the squid-catching programme there were many such occasions — his enthusiasm and concentration never wavered.

He was justly described as a scientist's scientist and felt no urge to involve himself in scientific policy-making or the creation of huge scientific empires. Yet his integrity and the conscientiousness that he brought to every task made him deeply revered and respected as President of the Marine Biological Association, 1966-70, of the Royal Society, 1970-75, and from 1978 to 1984 as Master of Trinity (where he was sad not to have his term extended when the proposal for him to stay on failed to get the requisite two-thirds majority at a college meeting).

In addition to the Nobel prize, he received many academic honours, and served as Chancellor of the University of Leicester, 1971-84. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1948, gave the Croonian Lecture in 1957 and a Tercentenary Lecture in 1960, and was awarded a Royal Medal in 1958 and the Copley Medal in 1965. He was created KBE in 1972 and was appointed to the Order of Merit in 1973.

While he was working at the Rockefeller Institute in 1938 he met Peyton Rous, the distinguished pathologist and his family. In 1944, during a brief visit to America, he married Marion Rous. A scientist's daughter herself and therefore used to the long periods of complete absorption in the laboratory and to the varied stresses of experiments going well or badly, she provided an ideal family background for her husband. At the same time she pursued a successful literary career of her own, and shared Hodgkin's wide interests in books and pictures.

The warmth and hospitality of their homes in the city of Cambridge and at the Master's Lodge in Trinity, gave the greatest pleasure to their many friends. In the later years of Hodgkin's confinement to a wheelchair he wrote an eloquent autobiography entitled *Chance & Design: Reminiscences of Science in Peace and War* (1992). This summed up not only his science but also his Quaker upbringing and his family life in a most engaging fashion. His wife and their three daughters and a son survive him.

COLONEL RODERICK HILL



Colonel Roderick Hill, DSO, former Lord-Lieutenant of Monmouthshire and Gwent, died on November 21 aged 94. He was born on June 9, 1904.

RODERICK HILL won his DSO in Belgium in September 1944, when the 5th Battalion Coldstream Guards, which he was commanding, came under heavy fire after crossing the Albert Canal. The battalion, operating with the 5th Guards Armoured Brigade, mounted one attack after another against German anti-tank guns despite suffering heavy casualties. After 34 hours they opened a gap in the enemy lines, enabling other formations to break through and continue the battle on a wider front.

Hill was a regular officer with 13 years' experience before the war broke out. He was at Dunkirk in 1940 and was mentioned in dispatches while fighting with the 2nd Battalion in Tunisia in 1942 before being given his own command in France. He was later decorated by the Dutch for capturing and holding a large German depot before the war ended. He then took over 1st Battalion, which formed part of the occupying army in West Germany.

Returning to Britain he led the Guards training battalion before being promoted to colonel of the regiment in 1949. He commanded the King's Birthday Parade in 1950, when George VI, who was not well enough to ride, drove to Horse Guards in a carriage. Two years later, following the King's death, Hill was one of those who mounted a vigil around the coffin as it lay in state in Westminster Hall.

He was offered a brigadier's posting in West Germany but turned it down because he wanted to spend more time at the family home in Monmouthshire after so much separation in the war. He thus retired in October 1952 and spent the rest of his life in public service. Edward Roderick Hill was born at Woolwich, the son of an officer in the Royal Artillery. When he was only three however, his father died from wounds received at Lady-smith in the Boer War and "Roddy" was brought up by his mother and a maiden aunt. As his father had been one of seven, he boasted 42 first cousins.

Roddy went from Winchester to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he read history and hunted with the Magdalen and New College beagles before being commissioned into the Coldstream Guards in 1926.

After leaving the Army, he wrote (together with the

Earl of Rosse) *The Story of the Guards Armoured Division 1941-45* which was published in 1956. By this time back at St Arvans Court near Chepstow, he entered public life in the same year, with his appointment as High Sheriff of Monmouthshire.

He became a Deputy Lieutenant in the following year, Vice-Lieutenant in 1963 and Lord-Lieutenant two years later, succeeding his daughter's father-in-law, Lord Raglan. He continued as Lord-Lieutenant of Gwent after the local government reorganisation of 1974 (exchanging the rose emblem on his cap badge and buttons for the Prince of Wales's feathers), finally retiring in 1979 aged 75.

He accompanied the Queen at the opening of the first Severn Bridge in 1966 and during her Silver Jubilee tour of 1977 — as well as attending the 1969 investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarfon.

He was chairman at various times of Chepstow Rural Council, the Curlew Hunt, the governors of the Monmouth Schools for boys and for girls and of Chepstow Racecourse. His other appointments included that of honorary colonel of 104 Light Air Defence Regiment (Volunteers).

Two buildings were named after him: Roderick Hill House in Tredegar, run by the British Legion (of which he was president), and the Roderick Hill Lodge in Chepstow, reflecting his position as Provincial Grand Master of the Freemasons. It is said that when Hill took command of the Coldstream Guards 5th Battalion in France, he turned up looking immaculate, in sharp contrast to the weary mud-stained troops he was introduced to. But he quickly raised their morale, partly by his own cool confidence, and partly by imposing his own high standards of self-discipline, with every guardsman standing to attention when being addressed, however furious the fighting around them.

Everything was going to be all right, he would reassure them, speaking slowly and deliberately, as if he was underlining every word. The same qualities of calmness and correctness were to characterise Roderick Hill throughout his life.

His wife Rachel, whom he married in 1934, died 15 years ago and is commemorated by a stained-glass window which he placed in St Arvans church.

Hill himself then moved to live near his daughter in Oxfordshire, where he spent part of his time helping to restore the Magdalen College library and conducting visitors around Christ Church Cathedral. His daughter and a son survive him.

ALLAN GRIFFITH

Allan Griffith, AM, Australian foreign policy adviser, died on November 23 aged 76. He was born on May 30, 1922.

A LONG-TIME colleague once called Allan Griffith "Malcolm Fraser's John the Baptist", and certainly he was one of the Australian Prime Minister's most effective foreign policy advisers. He was an independent thinker on issues as divergent as Zimbabwe, Australia's security in the Indian Ocean, the Great Barrier Reef marine park, Aboriginal land rights and Commonwealth Games sporting contacts.

Griffith could take a basic idea from Fraser and turn it into a reasoned policy with an Australian perspective. But he also came up with his own initiatives. He encouraged Fraser to resist the ambitions of the Soviet Union and to persuade the industrialised Western nations to help the poorer ones of the Third World.

In a Civil Service where anonymity and conformity ruled, Griffith stood out as a character. He was a careless dresser, and his rumpled appear-

ance could lead people to underestimate him. But he had a penetrating intellect, and was a passionate Australian and proud Queenslander.

His beginnings were humble. Allan Thomas Griffith was born at Toogoolawah, Queensland, the son of a butcher, and grew up in the timber-milling village of Jimna, near Brisbane. From Jimna's one-teacher primary school, he went with a scholarship to the Church of England Grammar School at Brisbane.

During the war he served as a radio operator in the RAAF, and while sweating it out in the jungles of Papua New Guinea and Borneo, he felt the need for further education. At first he could find only a book on algebra, but he arranged for other books to be sent, and so passed the matriculation exam for Melbourne University. He took his degree in political science at Queen's College.

He joined the Prime Minister's Department in 1952 on a recommendation to Menzies from Sir Frederic Eggleston, and he went to work in the external relations branch. With the advent of the Whitlam

Government he found himself marginalised, but he then became a special adviser when Fraser became Prime Minister. Satisfying the requirements of both Queensland and Papua New Guinea when negotiating the Torres Strait border treaty was his first tough assignment, and it earned him the praise of the Foreign Minister, Andrew Peacock.

Griffith had a great part in helping to fulfil Fraser's commitment to help to end the civil war in Rhodesia and in bringing Margaret Thatcher to accept the terms for settlement and the launching of Zimbabwe, as negotiated at Lancaster House.

As Griffith wrote in his book *Conflict and Resolution*, published a few days after his death: "The pioneer work of constructing and successfully implementing a negotiated formula for ending the civil war in Zimbabwe [established a pattern] ceasefire, transitional government and an internationally supervised election toward an agreed constitutional objective." Griffith took part in the subsequent process in Namibia, and, after retirement, in Cambodia.

His usefulness to successive Prime Ministers may actually have hindered his career, since they were reluctant to promote him because he was so good at what he was doing. In retirement he continued in his quiet way to work on sensitive international questions, particularly in healing the breach between Australia and France.

At the invitation of Sir Zelman Cowan, the former Governor-General of Australia who had become Provost of Oriel College, Griffith began residence at Oxford in 1987 (he continued this periodically for the rest of his life). In 1993 he gained an M Litt with his thesis on *Democratic Legitimisation in Zimbabwe and Namibia*, for which he also received the Marchioness of Winchester Prize. This year, while in Oxford completing his book, he was elected a visiting fellow of Oriel.

A warm-hearted and generous man, steadfast in friendship and devoted to his family, Griffith bore the debilitating cancer which led to his death with great fortitude.

He is survived by his wife Mary and three daughters.

Latest wills

Lady Gwendoline Hettie Nichols, of Whitwell, Surrey, left estate valued at £13,265 net. She left her personal chattels between the Parkinson's Disease Society, British Red Cross Society and the PDSA. Jack Trevor Stingsby, of Hea-Jack, Bradford, West Yorkshire, left estate valued at £4,447,317 net. Gordhadas Nalinchandra, of Gordhadas Bhattacharya, of Tadworth, Surrey, left estate valued at £3,995,036 net. Lily May Hemmings, of London SW19, left estate valued at £3,640,519 net. Ella Violet Monica Sutton, of Bournemouth, left estate valued at £3,144,687 net. James Alfred Main, company director, of Quanton, Birm-

ham, left estate valued at £2,355,737 net. Monica Lucy Ann Strickland, of Whitwell, York, left estate valued at £2,537,496 net. Irene Frances Griffith, of Welbourn, Lincoln, left estate valued at £1,192,299 net. She left £1,000 to both St Barnabas Hospice, Lincoln and the City of Lincoln Association for the Care of the Elderly. Maurice Jones Griffiths, of Cefnwyrrug, Aberystwyth, Machynlleth, Powys, left estate valued at £1,339,307 net. George Harbottle, of Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, left estate valued at £1,266,618 net. He left £5,000 to St Nicholas Parish Church, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne; £2,000

to Northumberland Golf and South Northumberland Cricket and Tennis Club. Anne Eleanor Harley, of Farmoor, Oxford, left estate valued at £1,041,678 net. Elizabeth Nancy Hoare, of Odham, Hampshire, left estate valued at £939,724 net. Reggie Iredale, of Norwood Green, Halifax, West Yorkshire, left estate valued at £1,078,793 net. Joanne Hubbard, of Eppingham, Leatherhead, Surrey, left estate valued at £1,088,039 net. Thomas Henry Lawton, retired surgeon, of Alrewas, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire, left estate valued at £1,859,297 net. Barbara Longbottom, of Cambridge, left estate valued at £1,275,331 net.

Francis Brian O'Connor, of Widnes, Cheshire, left estate valued at £1,214,339 net. Pamela Evelyn Priestley, of Lewes, East Sussex, left estate valued at £1,063,567 net. Marilyn Scott, of Outwell, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, left estate valued at £1,594,386 net. He left his collection of Hovercraft to the Hovercraft Museum Trust at Gosport together with £20,000. Arnold Herbert Robert Taylor, of London W12, left estate valued at £1,418,744 net. Peter Basil Trier, of Greenham Common, Newbury, Berkshire, left estate valued at £1,318,563 net. Thomas Alexander Watson, of Sevenoaks, Kent, left estate valued at £1,597,346 net.

16 DIE IN LIFEBOAT'S RESCUE ATTEMPT

FROM CRAIG SETON IN MOUSEHOLE, CORNWALL

EIGHT people and the eight people they went to rescue on a stricken coaster died yesterday in hurricane-force winds and mountainous waves off the Cornish Coast.

The Penlee lifeboat, launched from the village of Mousehole, was wrecked after braving 40ft waves to pluck four people to safety from the coaster *Union Star*, including a mother and two teenage girls travelling with their stepfather captain.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institute has started an urgent inquiry into the disaster. The tiny fishing community in Mousehole, where all the men of the Penlee lifeboat were stationed by the loss of relatives and friends as questions began to be asked about what went so tragically wrong in the darkness off the rugged Cornish cliffs.

The drama had started just after 6pm on Saturday and ended about four hours later with the loss of the two vessels, the lifeboat *Solomon Browne* mysteriously smashed to pieces and the coaster *Union Star* thrown

ON THIS DAY

December 21, 1981

The Penlee lifeboat, *Solomon Browne*, had a record to be proud of: in the course of its 238 launchings it had saved 91 lives.

aground and overturned against rocks off Land's End. The coaster had been on its maiden voyage.

Vital evidence about what happened could be with the skipper of a Dutch tug, the *Noord Holland*, based at Newlyn, which offered to tow the coaster when it first got into difficulties after its engines failed but which in fact never became involved in the rescue operation.

The coaster initially turned down the salvage contract offered by the tug; the owners of the coaster subsequently agreed a contract

but by the time the tug reached the scene, it was too late to help.

It became clear that as the *Union Star* started drifting towards the rocks the *Solomon Browne* got alongside at least once and took off four people including the captain's wife. The lifeboat radioed that it was returning for more survivors but nothing more was heard.

After midnight the first wreckage of the *Solomon Browne* was washed up on beaches quite close to Mousehole. Four bodies were found: three lifeboatmen, including Trevelyan Richards, the 56-year-old coxswain, and Mrs Dawn Morton, the wife of the master of the 1,400-ton *Union Star*.

According to information supplied by coastguards who monitored the drama and the log of a rescue helicopter from RAF Coldrose, the *Union Star*, carrying ferries from Dublin, never sent out a Mayday call or flares but asked for assistance at about 0pm on Saturday. According to Michael Sutherland, the deputy launching authority for the Penlee lifeboat, between 0pm and 6.30pm the captains of the tug and coaster were in conversation over their radios about the question of assistance for the *Union Star*.

Union Transport, the owner of the coaster, last night denied a report that it had told Captain Morton to refuse an offer of assistance from the *Noord Holland*.

UNDER THE SKIN OF SPORT

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In search of Christmas cheer
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OPENING SALVO
Atherton leads by example
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MANAGING NICELY
Platt makes a promising start in Genoa
PAGE 23

TIMES SPORT

MONDAY DECEMBER 21 1998

WORLD CUP STARS SHINE AS CHAMPIONS RESUME TITLE RACE



Petit crowns Arsenal's victory over Leeds United at Highbury yesterday by beating Martyn to score their third goal. It was a triumph that re-established the champions as Premiership contenders once again. Photograph: Marc Aspland

Arsenal thaw, Leeds freeze

A FEW years ago, Dave Bassett hit upon the idea of taking his Sheffield United team out for a Christmas party at the beginning of August. Season after season, they seemed to rouse themselves around the turn of the year after a few months of torpor and torture. Arsène Wenger, the Arsenal manager, may not have much in common with Happy Harry, but a summer Christmas is one idea he may be tempted to copy.

This time last season, Arsenal were 13 points off the pace in the FA Premier League and commonly held to be a team in crisis. Thus far this season their form has been so inconsistent that they have rarely merited a mention in title discussions. The festive period, though, has a habit of bringing them more presents than an eight-year-old with a bulging stocking.

Ominous memories of the startling transformation they effected in their fortunes last season were rekindled at Highbury yesterday afternoon, when they dismissed Leeds United, the team with the best form in the division, with a 3-1 victory courtesy of goals from Dennis Bergkamp, Patrick Vieira and Emmanuel Petit, three men who are only just starting to rediscover their best form.

The victory moved them up one place in the table to sixth, but they are now only four points behind the leaders, Chelsea, who went to the head of the top division for the first time in nine years thanks to their win over Tottenham Hotspur at Stamford Bridge on Saturday. If Chelsea appear to have assumed the championship mantle for London clubs this season, Arsenal are not far behind.

All the signs of recovery and excellence were on view yesterday. Crucially, Marc Overmars, the left winger whose 16 goals were so important to their double-winning campaign last season, shook off the malaise that seems to have been affecting him since his return from the World Cup finals in France. He tormented Gunner Halls down the Arsenal left and was a constant threat.

Chelsea may be top of the table but, Oliver Holt reports, there are signs of life at Highbury

Even more important, Vieira and Petit looked ready to embrace battle again. Their seasons, too, have been spoilt by the fatigue that afflicted them after their triumph in France, by injury and by the controversy that has hung over Vieira since his involvement in the unsavoury incidents that marred Arsenal's game against Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough on September 26.

If Vieira's escape from suspension at his recent Football Association hearing in Birmingham was a good omen for Arsenal, then better was to come yesterday. Their victory was sealed with a fine third goal from Petit, a goal that was strikingly

TOP SEVEN										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Chelsea	18	9	6	3	1	20	17	33		
Aston Villa	17	9	6	2	2	27	17	33		
Man Utd	16	9	7	3	3	36	23	31		
Middlesbrough	15	7	8	3	3	20	21	30		
Leeds	14	7	8	3	3	20	17	29		
Arsenal	13	7	8	3	3	20	11	28		
West Ham	12	8	6	2	22	22	29			

similar to the one with which he finished off Brazil in the World Cup final on July 12.

Add to that the inspirational performance of Bergkamp, who scored the first, made the other two and generally looked back to his creative,

floating, unremarkable best, and the fact that Tony Adams, the last of the long-term injured, will begin training again today, then Arsenal appear set fair for a combative 1999.

There was even a sending-off to seal their victory. Indiscipline was a feature of their play last season, a failing that seemed to inspire them rather than defeat them, and Gilles Grimandi volunteered for that duty against Leeds, dismissed in the 86th minute for aiming a head-butt at Alan Smith only 14 minutes after he had come off the substitutes' bench.

The win did not affect Chelsea's position at the top of the table, although they will be knocked from

their perch if Aston Villa get a point against Charlton Athletic at The Valley tonight. Chelsea have put a fine run together, one that stretches for 17 unbeaten league games, and they deserve their place in the sun.

Manchester United will be in the mix too, of course, but they have not yet shown the consistency that everyone feared would come with their break from involvement in European competition. Their defeat at home to Middlesbrough on Saturday means that they have not won for six games. Just like last season, when they led Arsenal for so long, everyone has been assuming that they will effortlessly move up a gear when they need to, but so far the shift in pace and effort has not been forthcoming.

The rest of the Premiership, though, including the surprise candidates, Villa, is holding its breath, telling each other that Arsenal cannot repeat the astonishing charge to the title that they mounted last season.

"Arsenal will be there at the end," David O'Leary, the Leeds manager and one of Arsenal's favourite sons, said. "I am staying with Manchester United for the time because you have got to see your bets through, but I know that Arsenal will be there, too."

"Last season they put an exceptional run together, the sort of sequence that you normally only dream about. They got a really finely balanced side playing superb football and there was no catching them. It will be quite something if they can do it again."

Wenger laughed off the fact that his side are now third favourites for the title, the odds having been cut from 6-1 to 9-2 by William Hill, but he did admit that Arsenal are getting closer to the form that would force them to be considered. "In the last four or five weeks we have not been good enough or sharp enough for that sort of talk," he said, "but mathematically we are not far away now."

Christmas is coming and the Gunners are looking lean again.



High and mighty: from left, Babayaro, Leboeuf, Ferrer, Poyet, Morris, and Flo celebrate Chelsea's ascent

Match report, page 25
Chelsea go top, page 24

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Matt Dickinson watches former England captain make his managerial debut in Italy

Platt starts fight against retrucessione

As the Italian glamour was washed away by the afternoon rain yesterday and the nervous exhilaration with it, David Platt was left to contemplate the reality of what he has let himself in for by becoming a 32-year-old football manager. Retrucessione in Italy or plain old relegation back home, the fear of it has eaten up many a strong man.

Not that Platt looked like a man who would be picking up ulcers yesterday as he began the fight against the drop with his Sampdoria side. If the premise stands that football managers, like generals, must primarily be lucky, the former England captain already appears assured of a long and prosperous career.

Had it not been for the fact that Oliver Bierhoff and George Weah's finishing owed more to Mansfield than AC Milan, his managerial debut would have been notable principally for a six-goal thrashing. Instead, his team were turning cartwheels at twice coming from behind to snatch a 2-2 draw, and they go into the Serie A break, which lasts until January 6, with a slender buffer from the relegation zone.

At least the interval should give Platt's employers the opportunity to resolve the lingering row over his coaching status, which turned from controversy into farce yesterday. With more intrigue and secrecy than can be found in a parliamentary lobby, Platt had to scuttle into a dank underground car park to conduct "secret" press conferences about the game.

The intention was not to anger the Italian football federation, who continue to insist that he should not be allowed to take charge because of his lack of coaching qualifications, but the presence is a thin one. Platt gave both pre-match and half-time team talks, and while he sat in the directors' box rather than the dug-out, he was relaying instructions via an intermediary, who was clapping a walkie-talkie. Given the lack of crowd fervour until the finale, they might as well have shouted to the bench.

Enrico Mantovani, the club president, expects some form of compromise with the Italian authorities this week, based on Platt continuing his fast-track studies for Uefa badges,



Face in the crowd: Platt watches impassively from the directors' box as his struggling Sampdoria team come back to claim an unlikely 2-2 draw against AC Milan. Photograph: Empics

'You go to bed nice and happy, then your captain has a bad night with his stomach and has to drop out'

but he also repeated that the club would be prepared to take the matter to the European courts.

From the cab drivers to those on the terraces, the locals are certainly happy at the appointment of a former player as manager. Given the warmth of their welcome, it was a surprise yesterday that Platt chose not to make a grand pre-match entrance on the pitch. Quite the opposite, in fact, as he scurried to his seat through the underground tunnel that runs beneath the halfway line from one side of the ground to the other. It was

a low-key approach that he maintained all afternoon, remaining impassive in his seat even when Ariel Ortega's brilliant free kick sparked wild celebrations five minutes from time. A quick punch of the air and Platt was back feverishly scribbling notes, as he did all afternoon.

His meticulous approach was already well known in Genoa where, as a player four years earlier, he sought not only to learn fluent Italian, but also the local dialect. A bit like Ruud Gullit talking about "garrin' doon the Toon".

Platt is already learning, though, that in management, the best-laid plans are easily thrown into chaos. "You go to bed nice and happy, as I did on Saturday night," he said,

"thinking you have got everything worked out from your tactics to your team talk. Then your captain, Mannini, has a bad night with his stomach and has to drop out. You suddenly lose your most experienced player."

With him it might have been easier to lift the players when they fell behind, but they still fought back well. I could not ask more of them. I still don't know what talent I have available here, but at least they got the crowd bubbling by the end."

Sampdoria's failure to win any of the last six games was shown in a chronic lack of confidence. They should have been swept aside once Leonardo opened the scoring, but Palmieri equalised against

the run of play. Bierhoff put Milan back ahead, but then Ortega produced a 20-yard free kick of summing precision. When Boban, Milan's Croatia international, was sent off for dissent shortly before the end, Sampdoria looked most likely to win but it would have been a terrible injustice.

Ortega aside, there was little for Platt to drool over as he returns to England for Christmas with a copy of the match video and to plan his next match — away to the leaders, Fiorentina.

Simon Barnes, page 27

Kelly in no doubt he acted in good faith

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

GRAHAM KELLY yesterday stood by the actions that led to him resigning as the chief executive of the Football Association. Kelly left his post last week after criticism of a decision to grant the FA Football Association of Wales (FAW) a £3.2 million loan in return for its support in the attempt, by Keith Wiseman, the FA chairman, to become a vice-president of Fifa, the world governing body.

Kelly, dismissing claims that the affair has damaged England's bid to stage the 2006 World Cup, said: "What I was doing was in the best interests of English football. I went into it with the very good intentions of trying to seek England's position in world football generally, and in connection with the 2006 World Cup campaign."

Kelly was adamant that the grant did not constitute a bribe. "A bribe to me is somebody slipping something into somebody's back pocket and then they stash it in the Bahamas," he said.

He also denied reports that the actual figure promised to the FAW was £6 million and not £3.2 million. "There was already an agreement with Wales, among other countries, to make certain payments under certain agreements and this has been lumped



Kelly: admits no wrong

on to the £3.2 million," he said.

Kelly, though, admitted that perhaps he should have kept the other FA members better informed about the grant. "With hindsight, it would have been better to come up front with it much more quickly than we did," he said.

Wiseman refused to follow Kelly in resigning, even though the executive committee passed a unanimous vote of no-confidence in him. Wiseman claims it is up to the full FA council to decide his fate when they meet on January 4.

Kelly told BBC Radio Five Live: "His prospects are being painted fairly bleakly, but then they would be because the climate at the moment is let's move on quickly and put all this unpleasantness behind us. If the council take that line and back the executive committee, then Keith has very little chance of staying on as chairman. His position remains fundamentally weakened."

TOP TELEVISION VIEWING FIGURES 1998

(First figure is average for programme; second figure is peak)

Sport	Date	Event	Channel	Peak	Average
1. Football	Jun 30	World Cup	ITV	28m	23.8m
2. Football	Jun 22	World Cup	ITV	21.7m	19.5m
3. Football	Jun 26	World Cup	BBC1	20.5m	19.0m
4. Football	Jul 12	World Cup	BBC1	18.3m	15.6m
5. Football	Jun 23	World Cup	BBC1	15.1m	14.5m
6. Football	Jul 7	World Cup	ITV	17.0m	14.1m
7. Football	Jul 8	World Cup	BBC1	15.3m	13.5m
8. Football	Jun 10	World Cup	BBC1	14.1m	11.8m
9. Racing	Apr 4	Grand National	BBC1	11.4m	11.4m
10. Football	Jun 15	World Cup	BBC1	11.9m	11.3m

TOP TEN OF SPORTS OTHER THAN FOOTBALL

Sport	Date	Event	Channel	Peak	Average
1. Racing	Apr 4	Grand National	BBC1	11.4m	11.4m
2. Athletics	Aug 23	Euro. champs.	BBC1	9m	7.9m
3. Motor-racing	Jun 7	Canadian GP	ITV	11.8m	7.9m
4. Tennis	Jul 3	Wimbledon s/f	BBC1	8.8m	6.4m
5. Athletics	Aug 22	Euro. champs.	BBC1	8.5m	6.4m
6. Motor-racing	Apr 12	Argentinian GP	ITV	7.4m	6.2m
7. Motor-racing	Jul 12	British GP	ITV	7.8m	6.1m
8. Motor-racing	Mar 29	Brazilian GP	ITV	7.3m	6.0m
9. Tennis	Jul 5	Wimbledon final	BBC1	7.3m	6.0m
10. Golf	Jul 19	Open golf (last three hours of play)	BBC2	7.0m	6.0m

World Cup dominates sporting year for armchair supporters

John Goodbody discovers that football was in a league of its own with TV viewers in 1998

Never has one sports event so dominated the annual television ratings battle as the World Cup did in 1998. The booming popularity of football can be shown by the fact that of the top 30 viewing figures in Britain this year, 29 of them came in the national game, with the only exception being the Grand National, which lasted for about ten minutes in April.

Top spot went to the game between England and Argentina in June, which had an average of 23.8 million and a peak of 28 million (when the penalty shoot-out was being staged), a record for a single-channel sports audience.

However, the highest-ever British figures remain an average of 25.2 million for the 1990 World Cup semi-final between England and West Germany.

This game was shown by both BBC television and ITV.

Mike Miller, the new Controller of BBC Sport, said: "There are no signs of the interest in football abating. The game reaches outside the sports community. In any case, what is going to replace it? There are no signs that any other sport is poised to take over."

There is particular interest in the World Cup and European championship, especially when the home countries are playing.

Club football pulls in smaller audiences. Only one game, Monaco versus Manchester

United, topped 10 million viewers in 1998. Writing in *Campaign* recently, William Phillips also pointed out that the average audience for the 45 leading live games, shown by Sky, on weekend afternoons in 1997-98 was 170,000 lower than in the previous season at 1.2 million.

In addition, the FA Cup final between Arsenal and Newcastle United was only watched by 7.8 million on ITV and 500,000 on Sky. In the previous ten years, the final had always attracted more than 10 million viewers.

One reason for the decline might have been the sunny

summer weather. This makes the audiences for the final weekend of the European athletics championships (second and fifth in the top ten, excluding football) even more impressive, especially as events were spread over several hours.

Miller forecasts that athletics could come close to some football viewing figures in future, although not to the extent of the World Cup and European championship. "It is a basic kind of sport, which everyone has taken part in at some time and interests different communities. It also has some young British stars coming through."

Formula One regularly got some solid figures, while Tim Henman's Wimbledon semi-final against Pete Sampras had a peak of 8.8 million. This was a very creditable figure given that the game took place at tea-time in midweek.

SWIMMING: LACK OF SELF-DISCIPLINE FLOORS WORLD RECORD ATTEMPT

Whitehead thwarted by naivety

By CRAIG LORD

NOTE the name Adam Whitehead. Few could doubt that he is the next on the list that reads Wilkie, Moorhouse and Gillingham, despite learning a lesson in self-control on the way to missing his world record target at the national winter championships in Glasgow yesterday.

In a courageous effort, that left him still in possession of the national 200 metres breaststroke title, Whitehead, 18, swam too far inside world-record pace for his own good in a triumph of heart over head.

"I can't fault his bravery, but next time he needs to be a lot more self-disciplined," Nick Sellwood, the Coventry coach, said, after watching his pupil strike victory in 2min 10.03sec, 2.24sec shy of the world mark established by the Russian, Andrei Korniev, earlier this year.

Having clocked 2min 8.54sec to win the European short-course title in Sheffield only a week ago, Whitehead had wanted to seize his opportunity to become the youngest

British man to hold a world swimming record. The excitement of that prospect saw him throw sense to the wind, however, as he shot off the blocks. His split time, after two lengths, was 28.62sec against his own 29.9sec, timed in Sheffield, and Korniev's 28.98sec.

By halfway, Whitehead was still flowing, his stroke sleek and powerful, his time 1min 0.94sec, a second faster than a week ago and inside the Russian's 1min 1.25min. Out of the turn, the teenager started to turn, the stroke started to pay the price; he stroke started to the extent that he was taking 11 strokes to the length as opposed to eight at the start of the race and the target steadily eroded. By 150 metres, the game was up.

Whitehead, who played hockey for Warwickshire and rugby, and cricket for his school before leaving to concentrate on swimming full-time last year, now hopes to break the record at the world

short-course championships in Hong Kong in April.

It is not hard to follow Sellwood's faith in his charge. "Adam has the ability to push himself to the limit, but there was a lot of ill-discipline there," he said. "He told me that he tried to throttle back when he realised what was happening — he couldn't see the water because of the rush of blood to his head and the

Results

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effort — but it was too late. But this was an excellent place to learn a lesson."

Asked whether he thought Whitehead was too young to have the pressure of world record targets placed on him, Sellwood said: "He and we... and that's everyone around him... have to learn to live with that kind of pressure because the Olympic Games

pressure is going to be colossal compared to this."

Greater experience was evident in James Hickman, of Leeds, who caused two upsets in strokes alien to him. Just after 4pm, he won the 100 metres freestyle in 48.57sec, the second fastest ever by a Briton behind the national record of 48.48sec, held by Mike Ffrench since 1992, and by 4.30pm he was the national 100 metres backstroke champion in a time of 53.45sec, the third best ever. Specialists Sion Brinn, in the freestyle, and Neil Willey, in the backstroke, were the victims of Hickman's turning skill.

Susan Rolph retained her 200 metres medley title by a farcical margin, even though her time of 2min 13.08sec was more than two seconds outside her national record. On Saturday, Rolph proved herself by far the fastest butterfly swimmer in Britain, her 1min 0.37sec time only 0.09sec away from Caroline Cooper's 13-year-old British record.

BOWLS

Local hope first to reach final

ALAN JONES, a lecturer in computer science at Teesside Tertiary College, was the first to reach the final of the Metro-mail International Masters in Stockton-on-Tees yesterday, when he beat another local hope, Stan Crowe, 15-4, in the semi-finals (David Rhys Jones writes).

Jones had beaten John Price, from Wales, 15-12, in his qualifying group, while Crowe had accounted for Mark McMahon, 15-3, and David Bryant, 14-10. In the other semi-final, Gary Smith showed he is still a force to be reckoned with by defeating David Gourlay, the Bupa Open champion from Scotland, 15-14.

Andy Thomson, the defending champion, failed to qualify for the knockout stage, while Hugh Duff, the world's top-ranked player, was beaten, 15-5, by Beryl Alderson.

SNOOKER

McManus stems flood

FROM PHIL YATES IN DUBLIN

POSITIVE shot selection prevailed over measured, percentage play as Mark Williams established a commanding 6-2 lead over Alan McManus in a surprisingly one-sided opening session to the final of the Irish Open at the National Basketball Arena, Dublin, yesterday.

Although Williams performed solidly to defeat John Parrott 6-1 in the semi-finals on Saturday, thereby reversing the outcome of their meeting in the final of the German Masters, it was McManus who caught the eye with breaks of 66, 91, 120 and 94 during a 6-3 victory over Tony Drago.

Yesterday, though, Williams won the opening six frames, and threatened to complete the first whitewash in a final of a leading tournament since Steve Davis overwhelmed Dean Reynolds 10-0 in the climax to the 1989 Rothmans Grand Prix.

Williams, who combined unerring long potting with a

deceptively keen tactical awareness, made an ideal start. Despite managing to construct only one break of any significance, a 64, he led 3-0 before McManus suffered a crushing blow.

The Scot, attempting to capture a title for the first time since the 1996 Thailand Open, held sway for most of the fourth frame until Williams cleared from the last red to pink. Adding a tricky black was beyond him, though, and he left McManus the opportunity to pot it to a distant balk pocket. McManus, who has had difficulty judging such shots since being forced to have a new, longer ferrule on his cue last summer, grossly misjudged the pot, to such an extent that the white found a middle pocket.

In confidently moving from 4-0 to 6-0, Williams did not allow McManus to pot a ball while compiling breaks of 64

and 101. That latter effort, his fifth century in five matches here, underlined just how sweetly Williams was cueing.

The last two frames of the afternoon served to illustrate that, even in adversity, McManus continues to battle. By snatching them both, he rekindled a glimmer of hope.

Williams obtained the two snookers he required on the colours in the seventh frame but left a testing final ball in the jaws of a top-corner pocket. McManus, urged on by a huge cheer from the crowd, made no mistake.

A clearance of 32 in the eighth culminated with him nervously stroking in the black, even though the cueball was awkwardly placed under the side cushion. It was a brave effort but Williams resumed last night requiring only three of the remaining nine frames to win the fifth title of his professional career and a first prize of £50,000.

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Nationwide League: Weakened Ipswich good enough to strengthen grip on second place

Burley's boys filling men's shoes

Sheffield United 1
Ipswich Town 2

By RICHARD HOBSON

IPSWICH Town are laying a strong claim to become the "and one other" expected to join Sunderland in winning automatic promotion to the FA Carling Premiership. Victory at Bramall Lane against an uncertain Sheffield United side yesterday extended their lead over Bradford City, immediately behind them in third place, to five points, and as they have one of the best defensive records in the Nationwide League, that gap might take some closing.

However, if George Burley, the Ipswich manager, could take enormous satisfaction from the result, secured with a depleted side courtesy of a late goal from a Yorkshireman, then the likes of Southampton and Nottingham Forest, struggling at the bottom of the top flight, might also derive encouragement of a sort. Drab and error-strewn, the game did little to advertise the virtues of the first division and whoever slips into this company next season will expect an immediate return.

After a dire first half in which neither goalkeeper was forced to make a save of note, Ipswich took the lead fortuitously in the 49th minute. A shot by Peta was deflected off Derry into the path of Abou, on loan from West Ham, who slotted the ball into the corner of the net from 14 yards. Five minutes later, Derry headed a shot by Naylor off the line before Sheffield forced saves from Wright for the first time. Ipswich began to dictate the pace, finally stringing some passes together, so it came as a surprise that the home side should equalise in the 78th minute. Wright reacted smartly to turn away a snapshot from Campbell but Devlin,



Bramble, who made an assured debut in the Ipswich defence, provides a study in concentration as Marker whips the ball away with a sliding tackle.

three minutes after his introduction as a substitute, arrived first at the far post to put away the loose ball. Derry volleyed narrowly wide seven minutes later, but Ipswich just about deserved the victory provided by a last-minute glancing header by Naylor from Clapham's free kick. Dyer displayed some neat touches in midfield. Peta broke forward purposefully while the extravagantly

christened Titus Bramble, 17, all left Jin of him, enjoyed an encouraging debut in defence and with his strength and pace brought to mind Sol Campbell.

"He showed no nerves, just played as though it was a youth team or reserve match," Burley said. "Tony Mowbray was the only player over 25 and the average age was 22, so I have to take pleasure from that. Compared with the side

that started the season we were without nine players either sold, injured or suspended. The squad needs strengthening, but at least we are in a strong position."

For Steve Bruce, the Sheffield United manager, the outlook is less encouraging. With new owners in place, he is working to trim a wage bill that reached £7.5 million in the past financial year and will not be replacing Gareth

Taylor and Dean Saunders, the recently departed strikers, with players of equal quality. Opportunities for younger players are presenting themselves — six of the team were 21 or under — but, after last season's serious challenge for promotion, supporters expected the club to kick on rather than fall behind.

"People have to understand that the club is going through a transitional period," Bruce

who declined to pick himself, said. "I could not have asked for any more from the players and what happened at the end was cruel." As is management, as he must realise.

IPSWICH TOWN (3-5-2): R Wright — A Taylor (sub: W Brown, 85); A Mowbray, B Ford (sub: P Devlin, 78min); I Hamilton (sub: L Morris, 83); C Woodhouse, M Quinn — Maccles, A Campbell.

IPSWICH TOWN (3-5-2): R Wright — A Taylor (sub: W Brown, 85); A Mowbray, B Ford (sub: P Devlin, 78min); I Hamilton (sub: L Morris, 83); C Woodhouse, M Quinn — Maccles, A Campbell.

Room at the top for Reid

Birmingham City 0
Sunderland 0

By KENTH PACE

THEY have forged their way clear of the pack on a wave of goals, a remarkable record of victories and a diet of inferior opposition, and on Saturday they surely passed their final Premiership entrance examination. By their refusal to yield to much the better team on the day, Sunderland extinguished any flickering doubts about their credentials and destiny.

Before the match, the theme from *The Magnificent Seven* boomed out of the St Andrew's public address system in tribute to Birmingham City's demolition of Oxford United the previous week, and such was their commitment and superior possession that the DJ must have had *So You Win Again* queued to play them off. Instead it was *Miss You Nights* in recognition of Gary Rowett's extraordinary second-half blunder and John Wayne's *True Grit* as Sunderland rode off with the point that temporarily stretched their lead in the Nationwide League first division.

Rowett's aberration came 12 minutes from the end of a fast and passionate affair in which not the least impressive factor was the firm but sympathetic refereeing of Mark Halsey. The robotic card-flourishers of the FA Carling Premiership could profit from watching a video of this game to see how players' respect for the laws and its enforcers can be gained by clear and correct decisions more easily than it can be lost by a rush to take both names and centre stage.

The footage that could haunt Rowett and his team was playing soon after the

former Derby County defender bravely visited the press room to explain his attempt at Probably "The Worst Miss Ever" "How didn't I score? I'll have to watch myself to find out," Rowett said before the replay showed him making airshots first with his right foot, then with his left, as the ball sat on the six-yard line begging to be knocked in. "Finished like a true centre half," Rowett admitted, wishing that he could swap one of the meaningless goals that he scored against Oxford for one of much greater worth.

Almost all of Birmingham's other efforts were struck from 18 yards or more as Sunderland, with Ball tackling destructively in front of a disciplined and overworked back four, kept them largely at arm's length despite the relentless nature of the attacks. Ball left the ground on crutches, his bruised ankle the legacy of a monumental display.

Sunderland, through Gray just before half-time and Di-Carlo near the end — Rowett atoned in part by shepherding the latter's effort away with Poole beaten — might even have won it, but that would have been a gross injustice.

Instead, Peter Reid's team had to content themselves with a sequence of results that brooks little argument: one defeat in 31 games, only five in 60 in the league. When these teams meet again, on the final day of the campaign, the championship will surely be theirs: Birmingham might just have something to celebrate then, too.

BIRMINGHAM CITY (4-4-2): A Poole — G Rowett, G Altman, M Johnson, S Marsh (sub: D Weir, 85min); J McCarthy, S Robinson, M O'Connor, P Holloway, D Pugh, D Adkins.

SUNDERLAND (4-4-2): T Stevenson — C Allen, A Gordon, J Rafter, D Lee (sub: J Walker, 85); J Smith, J Clark, M Gray (sub: G McQueen, 72); M Bridges, N Collins.

Referee: M Halsey

Blake puts sparkle in Jewell's eye

Bradford City 2
Wolverhampton W 1

By PAT GIBSON

ONCE a Scouser, always a Scouser. Paul Jewell, the Bradford City manager who was brought up at Liverpool before embarking on a career at Valley Parade, had been asked to "clarify the position" of Lee Mills, the striker he bought from Port Vale for £1 million at the start of the season. "Centre forward," he replied, quick as a flash.

What the questioner wanted to know was how severely the sending-off of Mills against Swindon Town the week before was going to affect Bradford's challenge for a place in the FA Carling Premiership. As far as Jewell knew, he would only miss the visit to Bolton Wanderers on Boxing Day and he did not seem

overly concerned about it. The reason for that was the form of Robbie Blake, who, in contrast to Mills and Isaiah Rankin, another striker signed from Arsenal for £1.3 million, was picked up for next to nothing from Darlington on transfer deadline day two seasons ago.

As Colin Lee, the Wolverhampton Wanderers manager, said, with some justification: "The boy was outstanding. If you had put him in our team this afternoon, the result might have been reversed."

There was a bit more to it, but Blake, 22, only 5ft 9in yet sturdy built, has been a revelation in Bradford's climb to third in the Nationwide League first division.

At the start of the season, he was a long way down the pecking order, behind not only Mills and Rankin but also Gordon Watson, the former Sheffield Wednesday and Southampton striker. Edinho, the

Brazilian, and Rob Steiner, who is scoring goals on loan to Queens Park Rangers.

"Robbie is beginning to fulfil his potential," Jewell said. "He has always had the ability but he is a lot fitter and leaner now and can do things on the ball for longer periods of time. He is not going to be able to play like that every week, but I can get a level of consistency out of him, he's going to be a terrific player."

"I will be happy if Blake and Mills play together for the rest of the season, because it would mean that they were doing the business and we would still have quality players like Rankin and Watson trying to get in."

Lee only wishes that he had such an embarrassment of riches. Wolverhampton played well enough for 20 minutes, but once Blake had capitalised on some poor defending to score his ninth goal of

the season with a crisp, low shot, only the heroics of Stowell, their goalkeeper, kept them in the game.

Ironically, it was a stunning save by Walsh, his opposite number, from Cornolly that led to Bradford's second goal after 50 minutes. Blake breaking away to set up Mills for his fourteenth goal this season.

It was only after Wolverhampton switched to 4-4-2 that they pulled a goal back through Keane and briefly threatened Bradford's supremacy, prompting Lee to admit that he would like to play that way all the time, but just does not have the players to do it.

BRADFORD CITY (4-4-2): G Walsh — S Wright (sub: A Westwood, 80min); D Moore, A O'Brien, W Jacobs — J Lawrence, B McCull, G Whalley, P Bange — R Blake, L Mills (sub: G Watson, 84).

WOLVERHAMPTON (3-5-2): M Stowell — D Richards (sub: M Gale, 83); K Cople, S Sedley — M Adams, C Robinson, M Emberton, S Connel (sub: G Whittingham, 83); L Naylor — D Connolly, R Keane.

Referee: S Bennett

Grimsby Town 2
Watford 1

By MARTIN WOODS

WHILE Bryan Robson, the former England captain, was enjoying a dream return to Old Trafford, another old player and former England manager was finding that giving six years of your life to a club counts for nothing when Nationwide League points are at stake.

Graham Taylor, who spent the first six years of his playing career at Grimsby, brought his Watford side to Blundell Park seeking the win that would leave them in second place behind Sunderland.

Taylor confined himself to this match to a watching brief from the main stand, leaving Kenny Jackett and Luther Blissett on dugout duty. From the back of this quaint, wooden

stand, the fan has a restricted view, aerial contests remaining largely a matter of conjecture until the ball drops back into view. A cynic might say that, given Taylor's footballing philosophy, a large portion of the match could well pass you by since the ball would probably be in orbit for most of it.

At full time on Saturday such cynicism would have been well and truly shown the door as Taylor's men, composed and diligent, competed with Alan Buckley's hard-working side to produce a minor classic of pass-and-move football.

Indeed, Taylor's only concession to his up-and-at-em pedigree was to run his side's socks off in the pre-match warm-up. The policy almost bore fruit in the opening minutes when Kingsley Black hit the post with Chamberlain stranded.

The first half was fairly even with Grimsby's approach

work perhaps the more penetrative and Lee Ashcroft and David Smith proving a handful for the Watford defence.

Grimsby took the lead three minutes into the second half when David Smith found himself in space and fired home from 25 yards. Equality was almost restored within a minute when Davidson, the

Grimsby goalkeeper, dropped a corner kick on his line but Noel Williams reacted slowly.

Noel Williams' contest with Richard Smith had been going the defender's way until the 73rd minute when the big No 9 tagged in from six yards after a low cross from Hyde. With three minutes left, Paul Groves, the Grimsby captain, latched onto the final pass of a delightful move between Ashcroft and David Smith to fire home from six yards. The final minutes were like the previous 87, played out from end to end.

He may have lost the battle but at least old-boy Taylor's rehabilitation is well under way.

GRIMSBY TOWN (4-4-2): A Davidson — J McDermott, A Galloway, J Handley, R Smith — S Cook (sub: J Watkinson, 80min); D Lee (sub: D Smith, 83); D Clark, 77, P Groves.

WATFORD (4-4-2): A Chamberlain — D Bentley, P Kennedy, R Pugh, S Palmer — P Robinson, A Small (sub: J Morris, 85); M Hyde, N Wright (sub: J Gurmendson, 48); G Noel Williams, R Johnson.

Referee: J Kirkley

Impressive and hugely deserved. Even Frank Burrows, the Cardiff manager, who is so often careful in patting backs, can be satisfied with the first half of the season.

"We are pleased to be there and we will give it everything we can to remain there. The quality of football we are playing and the way the players have settled in together so quickly has really pleased me," Burrows said.

The former postman, who arrived at Ninian Park via, among others, Coventry City, is scoring as if it is going out of fashion. His brace against Mansfield Town means the third division leaders will celebrate Christmas with a four-point advantage. It is

who scored twice and played a large part in another outstanding performance. He scored the first on 12 minutes, latching on to a cross from Danny Hill to bundle the ball over the line. Their second came courtesy of another Williams strike and although Mansfield were level by the hour mark, City took all three points courtesy of Kevin Nugent. City have now beaten fellow promotion hopefuls Scunthorpe and Mansfield in recent weeks.

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Referee: E Williams

Graydon states strong case for late starters



Little: not surprised

Walsall 1
Stoke City 0

By BILL EDGAR

WHILE David Platt attempts to prove to Sampdoria supporters that youth is no barrier to managerial success, another former Aston Villa player continues to state an eloquent case for those making a belated start in the profession.

The pressure may not be as intense for Ray Graydon in the West Midlands as it will be for Platt in western Italy, but the presence of Walsall in second place in the Nationwide League second division suggests that the 51-year-old

has come of age after just half a season in management. Graydon had spent so long as a coach that his summer move into what is increasingly a young man's occupation came as something of a shock to Brian Little, his former attacking partner at Villa and now the Stoke City manager.

However, Little was not surprised on Saturday by a gritty display from Walsall that knocked his side off the top of the table, a position they had occupied for all but a couple of weeks of the season.

"Walsall are well organised, they don't give a lot away," Little said. "They haven't got to where they are just on luck."

Indeed, the home side defended resolutely after Rammell headed his twelfth goal of the season just before half-time, the first that Stoke had conceded in five league games. Graydon said: "The players have worked hard to get into this position. It would be a shame if we didn't go on to do something from now."

The fact that Little and Graydon are both chasing promotion with Staffordshire clubs is apt, considering that their playing careers often progressed in tandem. They each scored 21 times in the 1974-75 season to help Villa back into the old first division and win the League Cup, a competition in which both scored in finals during that decade.

Just as Little was arguably the bigger name of the two on the pitch, he now has the bigger club in his charge. Nevertheless, he believes that Walsall, who were taken up from the third division three years ago by Chris Nicholl — yet another player to score a League Cup final goal for Villa in the 1970s — are capable of another promotion. "I would be a fool if I said they can't go up," Little declared.

WALSALL (4-4-2): J Walker — C Marsh, R Green, I Ridge, N Panton — D Wrack, B Lamont, D Keady, P Bennett, Rammell, W Ota (sub: J Bristow, 67min).

STOKES CITY (3-5-2): C Muggleton — L Sparke, P Robinson, S Woods (sub: B Pugh, 83); K Keen, D Oldfield (sub: R Wallace, 83); G Keanigh, R Forsey, B Small — K Lightbourne (sub: D Crowe, 51); P Thomas.

Referee: E Williams

Cardiff City 4
Mansfield Town 2

By A CORRESPONDENT

IT IS hard to believe that things come so easily for Cardiff City these days. Winning, especially at home, has become second-nature thanks to John Williams, who used to deliver Christmas presents of an altogether different kind.

The former postman, who arrived at Ninian Park via, among others, Coventry City, is scoring as if it is going out of fashion. His brace against Mansfield Town means the third division leaders will celebrate Christmas with a four-point advantage. It is

impressive and hugely deserved. Even Frank Burrows, the Cardiff manager, who is so often careful in patting backs, can be satisfied with the first half of the season.

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Referee: E Williams

Supporters demand Green goes

Cheltenham Town 3
Stevenage Borough 0

By WALTER GAMMIE

CHELTEHAM TOWN fended off a demoralised Stevenage Borough to gain a convincing victory in their chase for the Football Conference title at Whaddon Road on Saturday. Sixty visiting supporters vented their ire at a limp Stevenage display by calling for the head of Victor Green, the chairman, in a brief demonstration.

It was understandable. Green's decision to dismiss Paul Fairclough, the manager at the heart of the club's rise, was something that Noel Blackwell, his assistant and now caretaker manager, could not lift from the players' minds.

Blackwell admitted that he

"would have to talk to a couple of people and think over" his position as caretaker. Only the suddenness of Green's move, and a deeply engrained feeling for a club that he had served for ten years, had stopped him immediately following Fairclough out of the club.

Stevenage's self-inflicted wounds notwithstanding, Cheltenham played marvellously well. They not only kept a fourth consecutive Conference clean sheet but this time supplied the goals missing in their previous matches against Dover Athletic and Leek Town.

They did it without Neil Grayson, who pulled a hamstring against Leek. Happily, his replacement, Dale Watkins, marked his first Conference start of the season after a long-term injury by swiftly and effectively re-establishing his partnership with Jason Eaton.

Eaton profited by hammering in a loose ball, after Watkins had seen

a fierce shot blocked at close range by Taylor. Eaton rose superbly to head in a fine cross by Watkins at the far post for the second.

Ten minutes into the second half, Watkins converted a penalty after Trot had tripped Eaton as he pursued a high, bouncing ball. Watkins showed his composure after being reduced to rage by an off-the-ball incident that saw Reinelt sent off.

Steve Cotterill, the Cheltenham manager, said: "I had thought of getting in a couple of loan players but it's difficult at this time of year. In the end, it was really a question of Dale's fitness — and now you can say that Watkins and Eaton are back."

CHELTEHAM TOWN (4-4-2): B Eaton — M Duff, C Barnes, M Freeman, R Walker (sub: R Nelson, 70min); R Knight (sub: C Walker, 75); D Norton (sub: J Booth, 83); L Howells, J Victory — J Gammie, D Watkins.

STEVENAGE BOROUGH (4-3-1-2): C Taylor — J Davies, M Smith, R Trot, D Rogers — S Bevoir, S Berry, M Lowe — R Reinelt — D Palmer, C Allard.

Referee: B Carson

Delaney's best may not be enough

Manchester United 2
Everton 2

By DAVID POWELL

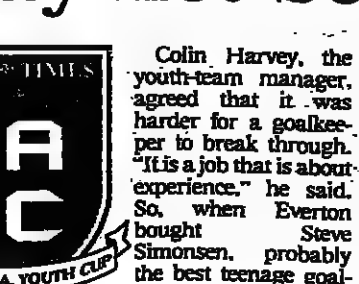
TWO minutes to go and Everton's grip on *The Times* FA Youth Cup, won emphatically last May, is working loose. Wayne Evans, of Manchester United, rises to a cross and heads towards goal for what seems a certain winner. This is Gigg Lane. Bury, though, and the spirit of Neville Southall lives on.

Gigg Lane was where Southall went, nearly 20 years ago, from Winstford United, for his first taste of League football, making 39 appearances before moving on to Everton. Now Dean Delaney, who aspires to follow Southall to greatness with Everton, produces a critical save, typical of the defiant old master.

The ball seems destined to squeeze inside Delaney's left post but the goalkeeper gets down, pushes it on to the frame and safeguards a third-round replay at Goodison Park on January 6.

When the United goals went in, the young Irishman had no chance. His handling was immaculate, his reaction saves and command of the area good enough to repel the raids where he did have a chance.

Of the Youth Cup final team, for which Delaney played last season, six players have made it into the Everton first-team squad this term. Delaney has not. His window of opportunity, as a goalkeeper, is a porthole by comparison to the skylight for his colleagues.



Colin Harvey, the youth-team manager, agreed that it was harder for a goalkeeper to break through.

"It's a job that is about experience," he said. So, when Everton bought Simonsen, probably the best teenage goalkeeper in English football, from Tranmere Rovers this season, it was hardly the news Delaney wanted.

"When players like that come in, you are going to be disappointed, but you have got to get on with it," he said. Delaney is the No 4 goalkeeper at Everton. An overseas goalkeeper stands at the top, Thomas Myrbe, of Norway.

The two goals that Delaney conceded exemplified why Luke Chadwick is thought to be heading the

way of Beckham, Butt, Scholes and the Nevilles: from United youth team to first at an early age. Chadwick scored two breathtaking goals, the first a shot from 20 yards, the second a run through the Everton defence to equalise.

Francis Jeffers shot in from ten yards for Everton's first, but the goal of the game belonged to the combination of Leon Osman and Tony Hibbert. Osman skipped past three United players before laying the ball off to Hibbert, whose drive from 25 yards found the top corner.

Even Southall, or Schmeichel for that matter, would not have stopped that one.

MANCHESTER UNITED (4-4-2): P Redondo — M Lynch, L Poth, J O'Shea, K Hutton — W Brown, M Stewart, G Gigg (sub: D Colquhoun, 85min); A Chadwick — J Fitzgerald, P Whiteman.

Referee: J Berwick

Platt kept out of limelight during first screen test

David Platt is the coach of Sampdoria — yet not the coach, because he has not got the right A levels. The lack of correct coaching qualifications means that he is not allowed to be like a normal coach and sit impotently on the bench. He has to sit impotently in the stand instead.

We have always been fascinated by the cultural divide between British and Italian football. Brits admire Italian subtlety of thought and touch, Italians admire British spirit. The British cannot cope with the sly and thoughtful violence of Italian football, the Italians dislike the in-your-face thugery of the British game.

The match between Sampdoria and AC Milan yesterday was an instructive journey into the no man's land between the great footballing cultures of Europe. The interesting bit is that Sampdoria have chosen an Englishman as the *de facto* coach. That's his job, all right, never mind where he sits.

The coach in Italy is supposed to be a thinker, a planner, a tactician, a shrewd. The appointment of Platt is rather like getting Ron Atkinson to rewrite the works of Niccolò Machiavelli — well, the Medici are always a hard side to beat, but we've got some good lads on our side; that Borgia is a good player, he'll run all day for you; and we're going to give it everything we've got.

Platt has no track record in football coaching. In this country we are used to managers and coaches being appointed for no good reason other than the fact that someone likes the cut of their hair. Here is an example of an Italian, a people supposedly much more logical about football than us passionate, misty-eyed Brits, doing the same thing.

I have often wondered what qualification you really need to be a good coach. I suppose in the end it comes down to the Napoleonic war. "But has he luck?" Napoleon is supposed to have asked this about any general whose name came up for discussion.

Richie Benaud, a shrewd himself, had the temerity to



improve on Napoleon, saying that cricket captaincy is 90 per cent luck, 10 per cent skill. "But don't try it without that 10 per cent," Benaud's Law works in most areas of life, if not most areas of sport.

Platt's assignment was, basically, ridiculous. He arrived on Wednesday night and gave a press conference on Thursday in which he showed that he has decent Italian, decent

manners and a decent suit. Yesterday he had to watch his new team attempt to improve on a record in which they had gone all but two months without scoring in open play.

Any big-game manager's first game is always closely watched, as if there was anything he could do with the players he has not selected and troubles he has not caused. This ritual examination is fit

only to answer the one question: Napoleon's.

So, does Platt have luck? Enough, it would seem, for starters. Sampdoria were playing one of the top club sides in the world, second in Serie A and with a resurgent George Weah, still one of the greatest footballers in the world. Yet Sampdoria and Platt came out with a 2-2 draw, the late equaliser coming from a free kick that should not have been given, put home against a goalkeeper who adroitly wrong-footed himself — both matters very competently called by Joe Jordan, doing the summarising for Channel 4.

One curious thing about the coverage was the pictures of Platt. There were no pictures.

That was a curious thing. If this had been British coverage, we would hardly have had any live action at all. It would all have been shots of Platt looking tense, Platt looking glum, Platt looking relieved. Instead we got a total of four Platt shots all afternoon.

The first came in the 37th minute, when we got the neatly barbered back of his head. A few minutes later we got a shot of him walking away from his seat in a plain but expensive overcoat. In the second half we had a brief glimpse of Platt's right ear and then, after the game was over, we had a shot of him walking away — apparently he had been waving to the Ultras, the fanatical Sampdoria supporters, and they had given him a bit of a cheer.

I think this lack shows an admirable sense of perspective in the Italian programme-makers. Football's truth — perhaps I mean television's truth — is to be found in live action. Anything else it shows is some kind of lie. Never take your eyes off the pitch: nothing else matters while the ball is live.

This is an admirable principle and I wish the gimmick-obsessed coverage of British sport would learn a lesson from this. A good story is a good story without it being rammed down our throats. Action is the jewel in television's crown. The personality of the coach — still less the personality of the director — is not.

'In the bleak midwinter, frosty winds make moan . . . and they can't even beat Blackburn'

Choir sings on as Forest hit all wrong notes

Oddly, in the *Bleak Midwinter* was missing from the choir sung at the City Ground, by those sterling chaps of the Bestwood Male Voice Choir. Perhaps the lyrics were deemed just too painful for the occasion. In Nottingham Forest's bleak midwinter, frosty winds are making moan and also blapping the ineffectual shorts of Dougie Freedman, water stands hard as iron, they can't even beat Blackburn Rovers, water like a stone, and besides all that, where the hell is Husteduck?

On Saturday afternoon, you see, Forest managed by their own strenuous efforts to sink to the bottom of the FA Carling Premiership, displacing Southampton. And I may not be popular for saying so, but there was a certain bleak midwinter purity about it. Fifteen consecutive games without a win. The absent Pierre Van Hooijdonk is now suspended for the next three fixtures. "I bet you didn't expect Southampton to beat Wimbledon," I remarked to a Forest board member after the match, by way of light-hearted conversation. He gave me a wry look. "Well, no," he said. "But thank you for mentioning it."

This is where it pays not to be a fan, obviously. While mighty dread was seizing the troubled mind of the Forest supporters, I had a surprisingly pleasant afternoon at the City Ground. It is hard not to relish the compulsive human drama of two doomed, kilted, weak shipwreck survivors in drifting lifeboats desperately trying to shove each other into the drink. As a rehearsal for the inevitable relegation dogfights of the spring, the match was simply very entertaining. "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight," sang the Bestwood Boys. And they were absolutely right.

Where was Husteduck? Having driven 200 miles to see the chap in action, I was naturally aggrieved at his non-appearance on grounds of ill-health, especially when other people made significant "Oh yeah?" noises at the news. "He's got the flu," they said, pursing

their lips like Les Dawson sucking a sherbet lemon.

A "sore call" was also mentioned, also a "cough". Naturally, I hoped he was afflicted by all three, and wondered momentarily what it must be like for him, being the Sports Personality Least Likely to Get Sympathy When Sick. Nobody's keen to buy him from Forest, apparently. His reluctant employers try "Who will rid us of this expensive Husteduck?" And all the other clubs say "Bilney, not us."

Yet even without Husteduck — and even without Blackburn's rival attraction Kevin Davies (on the

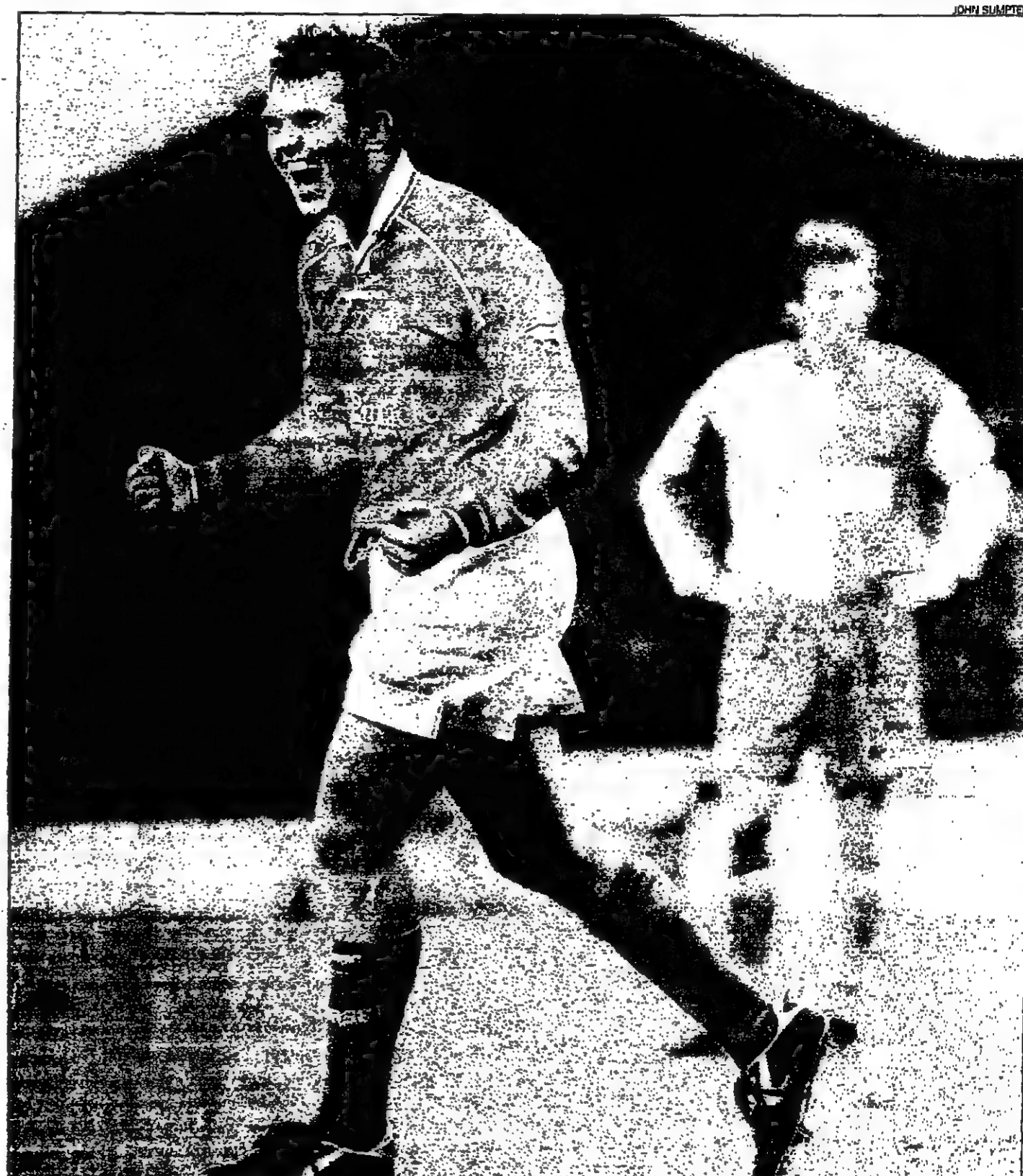
goal occurred eight minutes later, after a goalmouth scramble. "Who got that?" I said. "What's going on? Good grief, these binoculars are useless!" Evidently Neil Shipperley had made a shot that John Fylan, the Rovers goalkeeper, caught and dropped, and Freedman knocked it in. Such details flashed past me at the time, I must admit. I saw a blur, officer, a blur of red, can't be positive, could have been a mail van. "Shipperley!" I said, mystified, when a consensus on the sequence of events was reached — I thought Shipperley played for Palace.

So there was good news and bad news for Forest at half-time. The good news was that, at 2-0, they were in the driving seat. The bad news? That they were in the driving seat of the Hindenberg, and had been there too often before.

Three weeks ago, against Aston Villa, they also had a two-goal advantage at half-time and then saw Julian Joachim score twice in the second half. That a similar pattern evolved against Blackburn was inevitable. They can't maintain a lead, you see. And call me literal-minded, but it can't help that their sponsor is Pinnacle Insurance. Other people have accident insurance, fire insurance. Forest have pinnacle insurance. I ask you: can this be good for self-belief?

Anyway, four minutes into the second half, Nathan Blake scored Blackburn's first goal, amid a storm of ecstatic cheering from the away supporters. "That was great, wasn't it?" yelled a local press chap next to me — a remark that seemed curious (it was a messy goal) until I realised he'd said "That was Blake, wasn't it?" Of course, I nodded with conviction, and then secretly checked with somebody else. Clearly, this was not my day for winning first prize for observation.

On the other hand, there were occasions when you could hardly believe your eyes — Dave Beasant, the Forest goalkeeper, made a complete fool of himself in the centre circle, when he should have been



O Come All Ye Faithful . . . a joyous Freedman turns away to celebrate his goal with the Nottingham Forest congregation

in his box. And Freedman twice advanced on goal with clear chances and at the last second dithering fatally. The fans were going mad, as you can imagine. A third, clinching goal was needed: Rovers counter-attacked furiously, defenders were dropping like flies, and just when you thought Forest were

clear, the fourth official held up the fateful sign. "Five!" groaned the crowd. Five minutes of extra time were to be played, and at that moment Forest knew it was all up. We all put buckets on our heads, and sure enough Rovers scored again — another untidy goal by Blake — and with one last "How? Why?

Who?" the whistle blew. That was it. Villa revisited.

Noticeably, the choir gave no post-match carols, which was probably wise. "And ye beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way . . ." Well, there'd be a riot. In these secular times, it's a

crying shame, but you really miss the consolation of herald angels. "Is there a God?" some Forest fans may well have asked on the joyless journey home. And when they realised that Husteduck is getting a nice long Christmas hols at their expense, I suspect they had a less than encouraging answer.

LYNNE TRUSS



bench) — there were impressive thrills and spills in this match. Personally, I said "Ooh" and "Hang on! What?" far more times than is customary. For example, Forest were awarded a penalty in the 22nd minute for something tremendously controversial that I didn't see; and then, when it was scored, I was so busy trying to catch up on the supposed foul (Stephane Henchoz pulling the shirt of Andy Johnson) that I failed to notice who took the kick (Steve Chettle).

"Thank goodness for *Match of the Day*," I was just thinking, when another complicated Forest

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SPORTS LETTERS

e-mail, including a postal address and daytime telephone number, should be sent to: sport.letters@the-times.co.uk

Fallout from Ashes defeat

From Mr Bryan Pennington Sir, Of course Australia has kept the Ashes. How could it have been any other way? For two out of the four school terms practically every cricket oval in Australia echoes to the sound of leather on willow.

Primary and secondary school pupils are involved in a sport-for-all programme every weekend. The programme is supported by the schools, local sports clubs and parents. Is it any wonder that Australian sport is so dominant?

Yours faithfully, BRYAN PENNINGTON, Head Master, Sydney Grammar School (St Ives Preparatory), 11-21 Ayres Road, St Ives 2075, Australia.

Sideways perception of angling in 1998

From Mr Eric Williams Sir, From the gossamer-golden web of 1998 recollections spun with his usual unique elegance by your angling correspondent, Brian Clarke (December 7), one knotted strand must be carefully withdrawn.

The Graying Gala report from discreetly unidentified waters above Fullerton Bridge revealed the incident of a captured grayling so enormous that it jammed a broadside in a modest carrier — enabling one fortunate participant to cross for lunch rather than plod downstream to the bridge.

What Brian did not disclose was the intervention of a trophy barracuda which charged the

Criticism of British bowls

From Mr and Mrs Derek Booth Sir, The acerbic comments by Norman Sarsfield (report, December 8) at the Annual Dinner of the English Bowling Association may indeed have appeared as a cold douche when compared to the platitudes normal on these occasions.

The bowling greens at the Commonwealth Games may have been slow and difficult, but this was something that did not affect the players from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa who applied themselves better and therefore were more successful.

The real problem with bowling, the most traditional of British games, is that it has

Jewellery query

From Mr Paul Bate The photograph (December 14) of George Weah celebrating demanded closer examination. On December 12 I instructed the players in the Hazelbury Flucknett versus Drinton fixture (Perry Street League Division Two) to remove their jewellery. Are the rules in Italy more relaxed? George's saluting right arm indicated that he was wearing

Two rings and at least two twist bands with another large ring visible on his left hand. If the wearing of jewellery is dangerous, then someone needs to remind Oliver Bierhoff of George's finishes before he allows himself to be embraced by him in the traditional manner.

Yours faithfully, PAUL BATE, 30 The Park, Yeovil, Somerset. head.parkschool@ukonline.co.uk

Weak: ringing in the new



Weak: ringing in the new

Starting tomorrow

The good points of Federation bowling could be absorbed with advantage if the associations could see the benefits of pooling their strengths rather than dwelling on the differences. Then, hopefully, the prosperity of the game could be assured.

Yours in sport, DEREK AND VERA BOOTH, Leorden, 4 Bamburgh Grove, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 6RL.

MAGIC NUMBERS

MAGIC NUMBERS AND FREE CHAMPAGNE

What could be more desirable for anyone with sporting blood in their veins? The Times is again offering a bottle of Taittinger champagne to those who contribute a magic number for Christmas. A magic number is one that carries immense sporting weight and every year throws up new ones.

For 1998 how about 127 — the number of wickets Muttiah Muralitharan took to give Sri Lanka an historic first Test victory in England.

Simon Barnes will judge the champagne-worthiness of entries, which should be sent to:

Magic Numbers, The Sports Desk, The Times, 1, Pennington Street, London E1 9NW

or by fax to 0171 782 5211 or e-mail to sport@the-times.co.uk. The final collection will be published shortly after Christmas.

England's chances of hosting the World Cup in 2006 seem to be slight. But who will be successful? Rob Hughes, chief sports correspondent, reports from South Africa, Brazil and Germany as the campaign for 2006 reaches its decisive phase

Has Bath's bubble burst?



Surrender: Dejected Bath players troop off the field after Saracens had inflicted a fifth consecutive defeat on the home team at the Recreation Ground on Saturday. Photograph: David Rogers/Allsport

The ghosts of Christmas past will haunt Bath this week. Those great and glorious holiday periods, which promised a new year stuffed with rugby's honours, now hold only the promise of hard work merely to stay with the leaders of the Allied Dumb Premiership, never mind the cup finals that once seemed theirs by right.

That, in part, is the problem for Andy Robinson after his side's 19-11 defeat against Saracens on Saturday, the club's fifth in succession in the league. It is a sequence to which he never came close as a player and it was a grim-faced Robinson who, as coach, listened to supporters booing the beaten team that trooped off the Recreation Ground and who has been told that he should consider resignation. Robinson will not do that. It is not in his nature to back away from a challenge and the way in which he rationalised Bath's present problems suggests he has developed greater understanding of the harsh world he now inhabits, even though he remains a comparative novice in coaching terms. The old Bath, he said, scraped wins against the likes of Bristol and Gloucester in a world without the strong international veneer introduced by such as Francois Pienaar, Alain Penaud, Gavin Johnson, all opponents on Saturday.

David Hands reflects on the sorry decline of a club becoming accustomed to defeat

Our style came not from brilliant rugby, but because we won matches," he said. "It's about creating the winning habit and that's a lot harder in the professional world." It is also a lot harder when your players lack the weight, authority and rugby intelligence of the kind that Robinson's former colleagues, Stuart Barnes, Simon Halliday, John Hall, customarily purveyed. Bath played a shapeless game and paid the penalty, and Robinson himself must share the blame for that. Saracens, far from their best, adopted simple driving

tactics and a closed-door defence. Once they had repelled Bath's best effort in the first half, Penaud pulling Adedayo Adebayo down just short, there was never a sniff of a try for the West Country club until Penaud's pass found Iain Balshaw in the way and the young wing had the nous and the confidence to chip into space, collect himself and make 50 metres to the corner.

Saracens have now beaten Bath in their last four meetings, victory took them to second place, ahead of Northampton on points difference, and no other first-division club doubts the challenge they will lay down in the second half of the season. Moreover, they have, while they recover their best form, the substantial comfort of Johnson's goalkeeping; his success rate is well over 80

per cent and here four kicks out of five went over, embellishing the work of his forwards and the rumbustious Brendon Daniel on the wing. Only a damaging propensity to concede penalties (Mike Carr's two successful goals, and a further miss, came when Saracens failed to retreat ten metres quickly enough) prevented a more complete victory in which Kyran Bracken showed a welcome return to form. After Daniel's perceptive run out of deep defence, it was Bracken who, with a hint of a dummy and a powerful swerve, changed bad scrum ball into good and opened up the defence for Steve Ravenscroft to score his side's try.



Robinson: under pressure

Bracken may have been relishing a meeting with an old rival, Andy Nicol, but it lasted no more than eight minutes before the Scot was helped off, the medial ligaments of his left knee damaged so badly that he is likely to be out for months. With Richard Webster recovering from a fractured eye socket, Phil de Glanville missing for ten weeks after a shoulder operation and Jon Preston cruelly removed with a ruptured Achilles tendon, Bath have lost a core of hard-earned experience.

Robinson spoke of the need for character after watching a succession of players — with the outstanding exception of Balshaw, who is only 19 — make poor decisions. Bath tried to play rugby in the wrong parts of the pitch and their execution was poor, wide passes that the Saracens defence read like an open book whereas when they played down narrower channels, they made greater progress.

Saracens kept it simple and effective. It was scarcely noticeable when they were reduced to 14 men by the sin-binning of Tony Diprose, for preventing a tapped penalty by Bath, so well did their swarming defence operate. How ironic that the influential Diprose, his ball skills never better than on the muddy Bath surface, should have been at fault, but Saracens rode the mild crisis. Had Penaud not passed too early after a devastating break, they would have scored another try, but the Frenchman screwed the lid down on Bath with a left-footed dropped goal. There was almost a hint of sadness in the voice of Mark Evans, the Saracens director of rugby, when he said: "For so long Bath were in a league of their own, they had an aura that came from that dominance. That no longer exists."

It was Bath's fifth game for London Irish and far away his best. If he plays many more games as accomplished as this one, the investment in him will look far more prudent than that made by Harlequins in Thierry Lacroix and his funny foot-wear. There is something dandyish about a man who plays in white boots, as if he doesn't want to muddy them. If that is the case, why does he play rugby?

Richmond win name game

London Scottish 16
Richmond 26

By BARNEY SPENDER

WAS someone trying to make a point? The centre page of the programme, where the Richmond team was meant to appear, was blank, a list of numbers and positions but not a name in sight. Perhaps, like the London Scottish faithful, who struggled to take the gate into four figures, Richmond were unaware that this game was an evening kick-off to accommodate Christmas shoppers. Or maybe their injury list had increased to the extent that there really was no team?

In fact, it was nothing more than gamesmanship from John Kingston, their coach, who saw little value in circulating a team sheet more than 45 minutes before kick-off, even to the old Athletic Ground bedfellows.

"We live in a professional world now and I find it staggering that other people don't have a similar view to me, let alone the opposition know as late as possible," Kingston said. Fair point, but the public announcer should have told the crowd, small as it was, who was on the field.

One man on the list, making a welcome return after two months out of action, was Allan Bateman, the Wales centre, but it was the absence of

the forwards that made this such a hard engagement for Richmond. Take away Ben Clarke, Craig Quinell and Darren Crompton and a pack is going to struggle. Add the return of the elder Quinell to Wales and, as Kingston pointed out, that is half the first-choice scrum gone. To add to his woes, Barry Williams, the hooker, limped off with a suspected broken ankle.

"We have been hammered by injuries but maybe it makes you work harder and maybe we have to realise that without those players we have to play a different game," Kingston said. If the Richmond game centred on hanging in against an exuberant Scottish pack and hoping their superior backs might tilt the balance, then it worked. Easterby's try set up a tight finish but Vander had the final say with his second try in the last minute.

SCOTLAND: London Scottish: Try: Easterby (70m). Conversion: De Beer. Penalty goals: De Beer 3 (20, 22, 30). Richmond: Try: Vander 2 (62, 63). Conversion: Vander 2. Penalty goals: Vander 3 (28, 35, 43).

Richards enjoys attritional contest

Gloucester 18
Leicester 23

By MARK SOUSTER

THAT will do nicely. Dean Richards, never the most demonstrative of men, wore the satisfied smile of someone for whom life is going rather well at the moment. The relief of a vital away win, at a subdued Kingsholm of all places, two more points in the bag and the prospect of celebrating Christmas staring down from the top of the Allied Dumb Premiership.

Not bad for a managerial novice, barely a year into his job, who was propelled into the hot seat from which Bob Dwyer had been summarily ejected. By his own admission he took time to find his feet but now, in harness with Joel Stransky and John Wells, the Leicester machine is once more running ominously smoothly, powered by a pack that is probably at its peak and, as a scrummaging force, without peer in England. Didn't they used to say that about Gloucester?

You sense that Richards would still rather be part of it, dogging it out at places such as Kingsholm, rather than watching. Running the show from the touchline rather than on the pitch is still a new, nerve-racking experience. He spent much of the game fretting anxiously but need not have. Leicester, without hitting top gear, never really

looked like losing, even without Stransky, who should be fit in three weeks, and Greenwood, who between them would surely have made better use of the mass of possession that Leicester enjoyed.

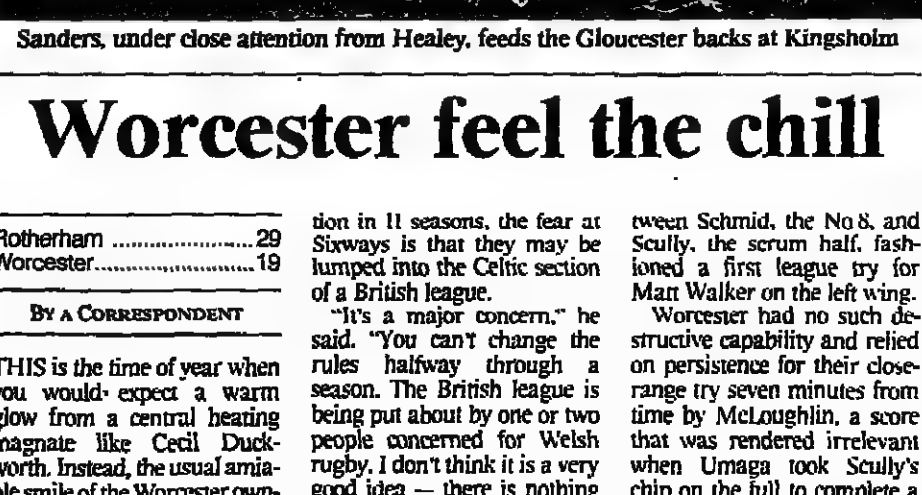
In Stransky's absence, Gordon Murphy had an uncomfortable afternoon as a makeshift fly half, having three kicks charged down, although he did create his side's one try with a crossfield kick that bounced kindly for David Loughhead. Such was Leicester's forward dominance, it did not really matter, as the Gloucester scrum creaked worryingly. Technically Leicester

were streets ahead, they controlled their possession far better, countered Gloucester's drives, and in Martin Corry at No 8 they had the game's outstanding player.

The game had been billed as a clash of rugby's two tribes, but it was a strangely passionate affair, with Gloucester in particular lacking real fire. The assertion of Richard Hill, the Gloucester director of rugby, that this was a huge improvement left you wondering just how low his side had sunk in recent weeks. The one flare-up involved Martin Johnson who was sent to the sin-bin after a punch-up with

Chris Forsey, but in his absence Leicester actually extended their lead through the first of Tim Stimpson's six penalty goals.

Hill maintained that he had been encouraged by his players' commitment, believing that he now had a base on which to work to take the club that "next stage". He talked yet again of the need to overcome the block about winning away from home — although restoring Fortress Kingsholm's reputation might be a start, and claimed to have discovered the secret after the miserable capitulation at Sale last week.



Sanders, under close attention from Healey, feeds the Gloucester backs at Kingsholm

It is a recurring theme, however, and at some stage Hill must look to himself if he does not crack it. After this defeat he virtually conceded any hope of the title, saying league points were now of secondary importance to his aim of winning the mental fight. That might not be what Tom Walkinshaw, his boss, would want to hear with only half the season gone.

At least Hill had the satisfaction of seeing Gloucester score two excellent tries. Brian Johnson snatched the first with an exemplary piece of finishing after Sanders and Mannix had looped in midfield. The second went to Mark Mapletoft, on as a replacement for Johnson.

Mapletoft's try came from a well-worked move down the short side off a scrum with his angled run leaving Loughhead floundering; he added the conversion and kicked two penalty goals that gave his side a narrow lead. But that only served to rattle Leicester's cage. They upped the tempo and Stimpson's kicking did the rest.

SCOTLAND: Gloucester: Try: Johnson (12m). Mapletoft (14). Conversion: Mapletoft. Penalty goals: Mapletoft 2 (40, 69). Leicester: Try: Loughhead (10). Penalty goals: Stimpson 6 (25, 33, 50, 61, 70, 79).

SCOTLAND: Leicester: Try: Sanders (10). Conversion: Sanders. Penalty goals: Sanders 3 (25, 33, 50). Gloucester: Try: Johnson (12m). Mapletoft (14). Conversion: Mapletoft. Penalty goals: Mapletoft 2 (40, 69).

SCOTLAND: Leicester: Try: Sanders (10). Conversion: Sanders. Penalty goals: Sanders 3 (25, 33, 50). Gloucester: Try: Johnson (12m). Mapletoft (14). Conversion: Mapletoft. Penalty goals: Mapletoft 2 (40, 69).

Newport edge through

By GERALD DAVIES

NEWPORT have a distinguished place in Welsh rugby history, despite the lack of recent success, whereas Llanharan cannot boast much in the way of notable achievement. But the famous black-and-amber coloured club nearly came to grief in the fourth round of the Swale Cup on Saturday against their less illustrious opponents.

Newport were reduced to 14 men when Gareth Taylor, the lock, was sent off in the 59th minute — having already been sin-binned in the first half. But the experience of the bigger club told in the end as Newport finally came through to win 25-19. They will now meet Swansea in the next round.

worries and won comfortably, while Neath removed Wrexham — even though the team from North Wales had gone into the lead after 35 seconds. It was anticipated that Aberavon, struggling in the premier division, might have had problems against Carmarthen Quins. The Quins, from the third division, have had ten consecutive wins. Their hopes were dented in the first six minutes when Cerith Rees kicked two penalty goals. These proved to be the only transgressions that the Quins were deemed to have committed in the whole game. The other 15 penalty awards were entirely in their favour. However, these early points provided the platform for a comfortable Aberavon win.

Worcester feel the chill

Rotherham 29
Worcester 19

By A CORRESPONDENT

THIS is the time of year when you would expect a warm glow from a central heating magnate like Cecil Duckworth. Instead, the usual amiable smile of the Worcester owner has been replaced by a frosty countenance and not just because his side were outscored by four tries to one by Rotherham in the second division of the Allied Dumb Premiership on Saturday.

Duckworth has spent his time and his money dreaming of reaching the top division of English rugby, but he is worried that when his side finally arrives, the promised land will turn out to be a mirage. If Worcester win a sixth promotion in 11 seasons, the fear at Sixways is that they may be lumped into the Celtic section of a British league.

"It's a major concern," he said. "You can't change the rules halfway through a season. The British league is being put about by one or two people concerned for Welsh rugby. I don't think it is a very good idea — there is nothing wrong with the English league at the moment."

But first Worcester must gain promotion, and that is still not certain as they followed Bristol in succumbing to Rotherham at Clifton Lane, which remains an impenetrable fortress this season.

Rotherham, who could yet feature in the second division promotion race, wobbled briefly after scoring two good first-half tries, but pulled clear when their productive link be-

Bachop imposes pattern of play

London Irish 20
Harlequins 16

By JOHN HOPKINS

STEPHEN BACHOP looks bulky for a fly half and, at 32, is far from the first flush of youth. But, goodness knows, the former All Black can control a game. Demonstrating why he has won five caps for New Zealand and seven for Western Samoa, Bachop moved Harlequins around ceaselessly on Saturday until the men in the multicoloured shirts hardly knew which way was up.

You never knew quite what Bachop was going to do next, whether he would kick or run. He would feint to run to the open side then double back around the scrum to penetrate the blind side. One minute he was scampering through a half gap, the next he was slipping the ball behind him to a team-mate coming across at an angle. As if that was not enough, there was his try. He ran this in from halfway, the glorious end to a breathtaking move that began, as near as no matter, on London Irish's line and bids fair to be one of the tries of the season.

It was Bachop's fifth game for London Irish and far away his best. If he plays many more games as accomplished as this one, the investment in him will look far more prudent than that made by Harlequins in Thierry Lacroix and his funny foot-wear. There is something dandyish about a man who plays in white boots, as if he doesn't want to muddy them. If that is the case, why does he play rugby?

Some saw this as another occasion for Dick Best, London Irish's director of rugby, to put one over on his former club, and so it proved. Victory was deserved over a team which, under the pragmatic direction of Zinzan Brooke, had won its past six games in the Allied Dumb Premiership. The only area in which London Irish were not superior was the lineup.

There they were inept. "Stephen and Kevin Punt are a steady partnership at half back," Best said. "They get us across the gain line. They are both very experienced and we need that in tight games. It has taken three or four games for them to click but today they did. Stephen's command of the game was impressive. He controlled the game on limited ball and from deep. It is very difficult to find an error in his play."

To complete, Irish had to move the ball away from the Harlequins' strength. They did this, at times quite stunningly. Apart from 19 minutes at the start of the second half, when Schuster kicked two penalty goals to pass the 200 points for the season, and Harlequins led, this was not to be their day, despite the thunderous power of their forwards.

Conor O'Shea, the captain of the home side, also praised Bachop. "When he kicked, he kicked well and when he ran he ran well," O'Shea said. "He brings an added dimension to our game."

SCOTLAND: London Irish: Try: Bachop (70). Penalty try (59). Conversion: Cunningham 2 (25, 74). Harlequins: Try: Wood (40). Conversion: Schuster. Penalty goals: Schuster 3 (25, 51, 59).

Business Direct Interest Rates Change

With effect from Thursday 17th December 1998

The Co-operative Bank Business Direct Account

Credit Interest will be as follows:

Balance	Gross AER%	Gross %	Net AER%	Net %
£2,000+	1.66	1.68	1.32	1.32
£25,000+	2.27	2.25	1.81	1.80
£100,000+	3.29	3.25	2.63	2.60
£250,000+	5.37	5.25	4.28	4.20

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Spiced up Vikings

As any amateur etymologist will know, the Vikings were responsible for leaving us with most of the less-printable words in the English language. For instance, and ****. Their image has been more one of merciless, monosyllabic warriors than of sensitive poets.

Yet their myths have left their mark, if only by giving us the days of the week. If anything, their influence this century has been particularly pronounced. Anyone brought up on Tolkien or C.S. Lewis will be pretty familiar with the kind of territory described in *Wonderful Beast's Wolf Road*: for here be not only dragons, but giants and dwarfs and mystic gold and all the other materials that one could wish for in a decent bloodthirsty evening's entertainment.

Wonderful Beast is a story-telling theatre company: it quite literally tells old stories

THEATRE

in a theatrical context, sharing the narrative and adopting appropriate characters in turn. The rather sedate opening of the creation myth feels about as incomprehensible as a Wagner prelude: what on earth are Yggdrasil, Himmimbjorg, Asgard? The story seems impossibly dense and the actors give the disturbing impression that they intend to do nothing but lol about and talk at the audience.

Everything changes with the second story, however, and suddenly the gods become well, human and believable, and the actors begin to tumble about in a gymnastic style made even more impressive by the fact that they are performing on a stage the size and height of a teaspoon.

The stories themselves are great fun: full of sexual misbehaviour, jealousy and subterfuge. The cast clearly relish writer Nick McCarthy's light turn of phrase: "Ask her, Sir, or your husband will be no more use to you than a kipper," begins a desperate Thor at one point; and his sparring but well-handled use of the vernacular adds appropriate spice to the proceedings. The early stories are full of pantomime; the latter half of the cycle is more sober as it describes the events leading up to the final battle.

The young ensemble cast are all excellent (if a little shaky in places), and their stories are given added atmosphere by Jan Hendrickson and Ben Harlan's music, which uses everything from serene to sinister to create an extraordinary and attractive production, performed with a mischievousness of spirit to match the original stories.

HETTIE JUDAH

CINEMA: Geoff Brown picks his ten top films from a year when Hollywood decided that size mattered most



Steven Spielberg won plaudits for authenticity in his portrayal of the Normandy D-Day landings in *Saving Private Ryan*, and even more for attempting to raise moral questions

Oversized, overlong and over here

Back in 1983, in a move to stimulate sagging admissions, British distributors and exhibitors decided to change cinema programmes on a uniform day, Thursday. The effect was insignificant. Stan Fishman, circuit booker for the Rank Organisation, cracked the line: "It's a bit like rearranging the deck chairs aboard the *Titanic*."

Now the situation is different. New films open on Friday. Admission figures are buoyant. And after James Cameron's epic, rearranging the deck chairs does not automatically sound like a wasted time. The ship may have sunk, but the film *Titanic* has been a howling success, and still reverberates in the public mind. By any reckoning it must be one of the films of the year, if only because, like the iceberg itself, it is just too big to ignore.

But there is more to the *Titanic* story than the size of the film and its bank balance.

While critics sneered about the piffing plot and shallow characters, audiences, especially teenagers, took Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet to their hearts. These were their identification figures, and they did not care what cornball dialogue the pair spouted. In any audience there is always someone hearing a cliché for the first time. Many may have been newly discovering the *Titanic* tragedy; Cameron's film, resplendently realistic in most of its trappings, did a great service simply by making a

past event speak to youngsters ill-used to looking beyond their immediate world.

There is danger, too, in the film's success. DiCaprio has been paralysed with indecision, not knowing what new part to accept. Hollywood's figure-crunchers have been given new ammunition for their belief in lengthy running times and vast budgets: two reasons why much Hollywood product is so flabby and vacuous. *Godzilla*, one of the summer blockbusters, carried the perfect post-*Titanic* tagline: "Size does matter." In a hopeful sign for civilisation's future, the film failed to hit the box-office heights; for myself, watching this head-banger was the year's most soul-destroying experience.

But this is the season of goodwill, even towards Hollywood, and any industry that can embrace films as distinctive as *Kundun*, *The Truman Show*, *The Apostle*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Jackie Brown*, and *Boogie Nights* must be doing something right. Like *Titanic*, *Saving Private Ryan* looms large partly through its size,

and its dauntingly realistic opening description of the D-Day landings at Omaha Beach. It also stands out by attempting to raise moral questions.

Spielberg's film lacked something too. You might call it the fun factor. For all its triumphs, one would not rush to see *Private Ryan* again for a considerable while, which is not the case with the ebullient delights of Tarantino's craftily cast crime yarn *Jackie Brown*, or *Boogie Nights*, the porn industry epic that established the name of director Paul Thomas Anderson. Or Scorsese's rapt contemplation of the Dalai Lama in *Kundun*, a film obviously flawed, but beautiful and singular enough to soar above the year's hubbub.

The film that would most repay return visits, however, is probably *The Ice Storm*. Ang Lee's witty and beautifully directed account of Rick Moody's novel about family upheavals in the permissive 1970s. Wives are swapped as the storm settles in one Thanksgiving weekend in Connecticut, and a society is deftly placed under the microscope.

Before too many trumpets are blown for Hollywood, though, bear in mind that any industry that can fail to nominate *The Ice Storm* for an Oscar must be doing something wrong.

And how goes the renaissance in the British Isles? It sputters, as our film renaissance has always done. The few titles that take in decent sums — this year *Sliding Doors* and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* — obscure the many that take in very little, or can never find a distributor.

Kean Loach efficiently padded his usual canonic in his Glasgow romance *My Name is Joe*. Neil Jordan's *Shakespeare in Love* is a toxic blend of horror, pathos and gallows humour in *The Barber Boy*. But neither took the breath away like John Boorman's *The General*, that dynamic portrait of the buccannery Irish criminal Martin Cahill. Here was a film that leapt off the screen, dazzling the eyes, provoking the mind with its sea-sawing moods and delight in Ireland's rebel

streak. *Love is the Devil* was another great achievement: a brilliant if selective portrait of the artist Francis Bacon, and an excellent example of an experimental director reaching out confidently towards mainstream audiences while still keeping faith with his roots.

During the year a small stream of foreign films trickled through to the dwindling number of hospitable cinemas, though you had to move fast — a week or two at London's ICA Cinema, scattered days throughout the country: that was the pattern.

Running through the releases, I am struck more than ever by the difference between the quality arthouse product of times past and today. This year's most distinguished offerings were small films, simply shot, from directors with nothing of the old establishment about them. From Russia there was Aleksandr Sokurov's starkly moving *Mother and Son* (the mother dying, the son tending), and Serge Bodrov's film set against the conflict in Chechnya, *Prisoner of the Mountains*. Death also

stalked *Taste of Cherry*, from Iran's Abbas Kiarostami, a lyrical and humane film with a facile resonance. And France came up trumps with two fine first features, Bruno Dumont's *La Vie de Jésus*, a rigorous but tender drama about aimless rural youth, and Erick Zonic's marvellously acted study of friendship, *The Dream Life of Angels*.

Directors with wider reputations, the kind who usually set up shop at the Curzon Mayfair, produced little to equal this roster. Pedro Almodóvar gave us *Live Flesh*, a full-blooded, constantly surprising treatment of a Ruth Rendell thriller, packed to the sprocket holes with inventive imagery and outrageous characters tortured by love and desire. French cinema's best shot was Philippe de Broca's enjoyable swashbuckler *Le Bossu*, which did good business; its worst was Claude Berri's calcified Resistance drama *Lucie Aubrac*. The usual dazzlers from China or Taiwan were absent.

So from this celluloid heap of the year's releases, what should I pick for my ten best? This is hard, though it would be easier if some films could have post-release surgery. I would therefore suggest *The General*, *The Ice Storm*, *Love is the Devil*, *The Dream Life of Angels*, *Taste of Cherry*, *Live Flesh*, *Mother and Son*, *Saving Private Ryan* (minus a few scenes), an abbreviated *Titanic*, and *Kundun* with the slack taken out. Now if you will excuse me, I have some deck chairs to rearrange.

This week in THE TIMES



THEATRE

Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance* cast anchor at the Queen's OPENS: Tonight
REVIEW: Wednesday



OPERA

Elena Kelesidi sings in the Royal Opera's new *The Golden Cockerel* OPENS: Tomorrow
REVIEW: Thursday



DANCE

Sarah Wildor makes her debut in the Royal Ballet's *Cinderella*. Festival Hall PERFORMANCE: Wed
REVIEW: Next week



FILM

Paranoid stalks Will Smith in the fast-paced political thriller *Enemy of the State* RELEASED: Boxing Day
REVIEW: Thursday

OPERA & BALLET

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AL

Adventure that falls flat on its face

Phyllida Lloyd certainly makes the audience wait for the first laugh in her new production of Bizet's opera in Leeds, until the fourth act to be precise, when the crowd greets the rock star-style Escamillo by brandishing about three dozen posters of him in sultry George Michael profile: just one of them is upside down. It is a wonderful moment and I hope it was intentional, though production photographs cast doubt on this.

Otherwise, this is a defiantly dour, unseasonal offering. Someone at Opera North has carelessly omitted to inform Miss Lloyd that *Carmen* is a comedy, though one hoped she might have found this out for herself. Maybe she worked only from the frankly dreadful Keith and Emma Warner "version" of the text — it is too far from the original to be called a translation — with its senseless juxtaposition of self-conscious modernisms and pure translatorese. The dialogue was apparently "reworked in rehearsal" and such sparkling lines as "move yer arse" may give some impression of the quality of this reworking.

You would think that *Carmen*, at once one of the most popular as well as the most accomplished of all operas, would be fail-safe, but it must have suffered more duff stagings than almost any other. This production has, I fear, been misconceived from the word go, and one reason is probably too close a study of its source, Prosper Mérimée's novella (1845). This, a masterpiece in its own right, is a hering of rosiest hue, and any effort to revert to it when staging Bizet's opera comique of 30 years later is, as even Peter Brook failed to notice, to chase a wild goose up a blind alley.

OPERA

Carmen

Grand Leeds

Bizet and his librettists transformed *Carmen* from the darksome, homicidal criminal of the novella into a creature of light, a free-spirited woman who controls her life — and the men in it — largely through humour: she makes one mistake, which is to get mixed up with a mother-fixated spoilt priest, and pays with her life. This does not prevent the opera from being basically a sprightly musical comedy that takes a wrong turn, as Oscar Hammerstein knew well — *Carmen Jones* is a fit and worthy tribute to Bizet. The music is for the most part witty, flip, ironic, detached, the control of dramatic mood faultless, not that you would necessarily gather this from Andras Ligeti's heavy-breathing, sub-verbato reading in Leeds.

While the Spanishness of the music is very much filtered through French sensibility and not all that important, there is no mention of Seville in the programme synopsis, probably a prudent move since the picture the production presents of Spain today would have Madrid recalling its ambassador for consultation. The military beat up and rob backpackers, and are prone to gang rape and abusing children. The smugglers deal in cocaine and snort it on stage — gosh, how daring — and are deadly serious about it: there is not a laugh anywhere in the central acts.

Against this irrelevant background certain essential elements go missing, like any idea of who Carmen and Don

José are, any sense of either their current or potential relationship, and without that *Carmen* can seem a very long and pointless opera. I fear this is a case of a production team aiming at being amazingly adventurous, helping Auntie Opera to show us her knickers. Well, sorry sweethearts, Auntie Opera has been showing us her knickers for 400 years now, and what you have come up with is desperately old-fashioned, and tedious with it. *Carmen* is one of the supreme masterpieces of opera, and you haven't come within ten miles of it.

Which is sad, because in Ruby Philogene there is a protagonist of boundless potential. She has the right smooth, smoky mezzo and the looks to drive men mad. She is young yet, and lacks weight in the lower register, but wisely desists from replacing it with chesty hooting. In about ten years' time, if she meets a director who allows her to play Bizet's rather than Mérimée's Carmen, and a conductor more sympathetic to French music, she will be marvellous.

Not a lot else to report. The hugely promising Antoni Garfield Henry was in thin voice on Saturday, save at the very top of his range — some impressively beefy high notes — and was made to play Don José as a whining, wimpish hysteric. Mark Stone was very funny as the rock star Toreador but he, too, is young yet and doesn't quite have the bottom notes. Susannah Glanville was a bright, positive Micaela. The chorus was good, the orchestra as good as they could be under a conductor who showed little sympathy with the quintessential elegance of the score.

RODNEY MILNES



Ruby Philogene (Carmen) and Antoni Garfield Henry (Don José) in Phyllida Lloyd's new staging for Opera North

Outrage with flair

A true sense of occasion surrounded Marilyn Manson's only British appearance of the year at a sold-out Brixton Academy. Until recently, Britain had been slow to warm to the Los Angeles-based band, whose eponymous frontman and chief strategist, formerly Brian Warner, is a self-made freak of libertarian Satanist sympathies who delights in outraging America's Religious Right. But his recent adoption of a more populist sound and image, combined with his growing reputation for astounding live shows, have clearly won over many floating voters.

The band's highly melodramatic set shamelessly plundered rock history for both musical and visual inspiration. The supercharged thrash metal sound of their first two albums was much in evidence, albeit now heavily informed by the music which soundtracked Warner's youth, notably 1980s new wave and 1970s glam rock. There were numerous allusions to David Bowie and Roxy Music, the architects of this school of stylised rock theatre, although Alice Cooper, Kiss and Iggy Pop have been major influences too.

POP

But Marilyn Manson are no mere copyists. Their sense-swamping spectacle elevated the lurid sensationalism of previous generations to new heights using cutting-edge technology, adding samplers and deafening industrial noise to a nihilistic orgy of make-up, props and costume changes. This was Orwellian rock opera of exhilarating intensity, eschewing the self-glorifying pantomime of orthodox rock shows for a self-lacerating commentary on fame, fan worship and false idols.

The pace of the show was sluggish at first, and it initially seemed that Warner's high-camp histrionics were not translating well to a jaded London audience. But five or six numbers in, the visual presentation moved into high gear, which helped to compensate for some of the more characterless songs. The crowd also responded rapturously to two shrewdly chosen cover versions, a funeral dirge of the Burythinks' hit *Sweet Dreams* and a savage assault on Patti Smith's feminist punk classic *Rock 'n' roll Nigger*.

Throughout the impressive choreographed set, Warner adopted several savagely satirical guises, including a hellfire preacher, a totalitarian dictator and an androgynous stripper. During one hymn to doomed and dysfunctional love, *Mechanical Animals*, he towered above the stage on giant stilts and crutches like some bizarre insect from the imagination of a warped Dr Seuss. Later, for the band's provocatively titled new single *I Don't Like the Drugs (But the Drugs Like Me)* he adopted the persona of a nightmarish game show host.

Apart from such tabloid-baiting stunts as simulated masturbation, Marilyn Manson did little to justify their reputation for controversy. Nor did they deliver many truly memorable tunes besides their stomping former singles *The Dope Show* and *The Beautiful People*. Warner will require a few more genuine anthems before he assumes the messianic mantle of his childhood heroes, but his intelligence, black humour and flair for confrontational theatre remain unequalled in modern rock.

JOHN ALLISON

STEPHEN DALTON

In the concrète jungle

Enter the loudspeakers, edit the audience. Not even Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony*, the erotic and colour excesses of which are well-known to the regulars at Symphony Hall, could secure more than a respectable attendance at a concert featuring two pre-recorded works in the first half and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra only after the interval.

Birmingham Electroacoustic Sound Theatre is expert in presenting electronic music and Jonny Harrison certainly made enterprising use of the space and the many loudspeakers in it. But so what? Musical interest, or anything equivalent to it, is minimal in Edgard

Vardèse's *Poème électronique*, and non-existent in Francis Dhomont's *Chiaroscuro* which, except where it discovers the sound of running water, is a monument to acidity.

In an overlong spoken introduction to the concert, the conductor David Robertson and Harrison attributed the presence of the electronic pieces partly to the fiftieth anniversary of Pierre Schaeffer's discovery of *musique concrète* and partly to Messiaen's use in *Turangalila* of a sort of electronic instrument called the

CONCERTS

CSO/Robertson

Birmingham

ondes martenot, which is also 50 years old this year. The irony is that on this occasion, as on many others, there were problems in integrating the instrument with the orchestra. Happily, the ondes martenot did not uniformly dominate the proceedings which, after

the example of Jeanne Loriod — the composer's sister-in-law who took part in the first performance — was in danger of becoming accepted as the authentic performing tradition.

As Cynthia Millar played it, the problem was usually the opposite. It is clear from the scoring of *Jardin du sommeil d'amour*, for example, that the balance should favour the ondes rather than the first violins playing in unison with it. If it does not — and it, moreover, their timing is not quite synchronised — the unique col-



Olivier Messiaen: posed problems of integration

ouring of the movement is lost. Similarly, the uninhibited screech of the instrument in the preceding movement, *Joie du sang des étoiles*, is essential to the narrative content. And yet there were other passages where its profile was clearly too high.

It cannot be easy for a guest conductor, however expert in these matters, to come in and sort out such problems in just a few hours of rehearsal. Robertson apparently had trouble too in clarifying the textures to make the inner layers of interest consistently audible. He did, on the other hand, conduct a performance of considerable physical exhilaration. In Pierre-Laurent Aimard he had an inspired piano soloist who was particularly successful at those points where he alone takes over from the orchestra in full flight and, against all the odds, is expected to sustain the intensity.

GERALD LARNER

Arabian knight

On paper at least, the final programme of the London Philharmonic's Rimsky-Korsakov Festival looked odd. Wolfgang Sawallisch's distinguished career has not been made conducting this composer, and *Scheherazade* is the one Rimsky work that does not need help. Putting it in the context of works dating from the same period by two of Rimsky's contemporaries would have been a good idea had they not seemed so arbitrarily chosen: Sibelius and Brahms featured only fleetingly in the Russian composer's consciousness.

But then the choice of Sibelius's *Swan of Tuonela* began to make sense. As one of the few liberal Russian composers, Rimsky would probably have approved of the national movement in a Finland still under the Russian yoke, especially as its strongest voices were all artistic and the way in which that movement drew its strength from legends such as the *Kalevala* would have also appealed to the folklorist in him. This is one of the simplest and strongest of Sibelius's *Kalevala* works, at least when performed as movingly as here: the divided LPO strings glistened as the swan on the river of death was conjured up by Sue Bohling's cor anglais, and Sawallisch was attentive to every detail.

Brahms's Double Concerto, though, seemed doubly out of

LPO/Sawallisch

Rimsky-Korsakov Festival

place, hard to justify also on the basis of this unsettled and hard-edged account. Sawallisch failed to draw warm enough playing from the orchestra, but the real problem was an ill-matched pair of soloists. Communication between the violinist Dmitry Sitkovetsky and cellist Truls Mørk was minimal, both suffered intonation problems, and their very different styles blended poorly: Mørk's intense, sometimes wiry sound was just too different from Sitkovetsky's icy tone and demeanour.

At least the decision to close the series with *Scheherazade* was vindicated by a dazzling performance here. It is too easy to take the piece for granted, but this was a reminder that it is a work of great genius, the peak of Russian musical orientalism. Sawallisch evoked all the story-telling excitement and languid beauty, although it was hard not to reflect on the grim irony of such descriptive titles as *The Festival of Baghdad*. The orchestra's polished playing had both sweep and intimacy, and the leader, Joukim Svenheden, shone in the solos representing Scheherazade herself.

JOHN ALLISON

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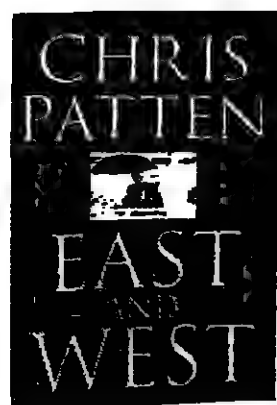
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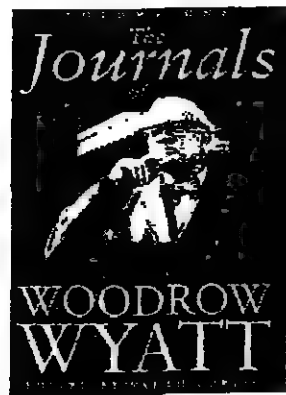
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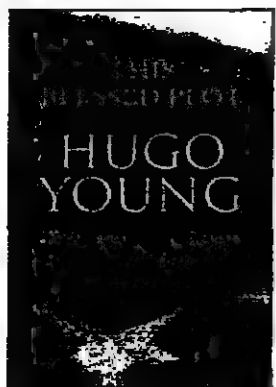
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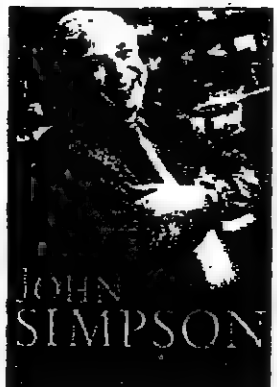
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Banks' caution leads to sharp fall in buyouts

BY PAUL DURMAN

THE number and value of company buyouts has contracted sharply since the banks took fright at market turbulence and the threat of recession.

According to figures from KPMG Corporate Finance, the value of deals slumped in the final quarter to £1.4 billion, against £3.4 billion in the previous quarter. Transaction levels were little more than half the level of a year ago.

Banks became more nervous to lend after the Russian economic crisis threw the bond markets into turmoil. It became difficult to issue the

high-yielding bonds that are used to finance many buyouts and buy-ins.

Mike Stevens, head of MBO services at KPMG Corporate Finance, said: "It became difficult to get other banks to step in to take part of the risk. People who were previously happy to take on £40 million a time but underwrote £100 million couldn't get someone to take the other £60 million off their hands. So they cut back their commitment to £40 million."

One prominent casualty was the £16 million deal to take Ushers of Trowbridge.

private. The scheme, led by the brewer's management, fell apart when NatWest Bank withdrew an offer of finance.

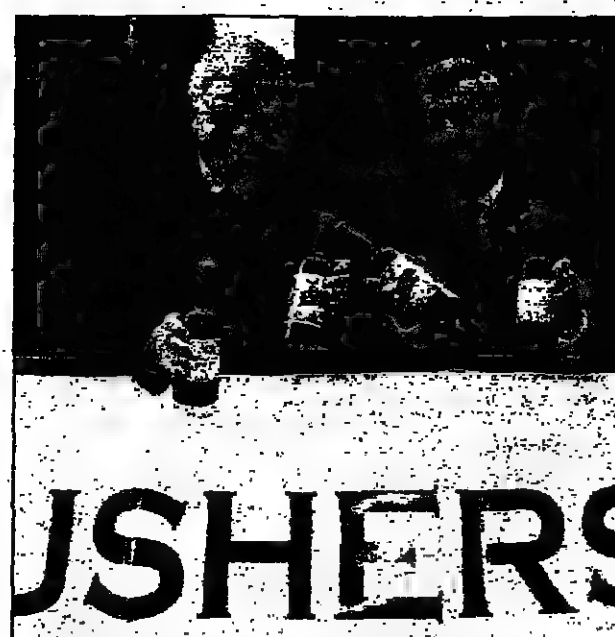
This year will still be a record year for buyouts, with £11.8 billion of deals completed. This is almost 45 per cent higher than the 1997 total of £8.2 billion.

Only 27 large buyouts (defined as those worth more than £10 million) were completed in the final quarter – fewer than at any time since the third quarter of 1996. The value of deals has declined month by month, falling from £626

million in October to only £297 million in December.

KPMG said traditional management buyouts continue to decline in importance, and represented 56 per cent by value of this year's deals. The growth area is management buy-ins and institutional buyouts.

Mr Stevens estimated that private equity investors are still sitting on £5 billion for which they have yet to find suitable investments. KPMG is optimistic about the buyout market but does not expect a full recovery until at least the middle of next year.



Roger North, chief executive, and Martin Coles, finance director of Ushers, saw an offer of finance withdrawn

Fleming denies bid approach

Robert Fleming, the independent investment bank, yesterday denied it had received a £3 billion offer from Commerzbank, the third largest German bank.

A spokesman for Fleming said the bank had not held talks with anyone. It alone received a takeover approach. A report had suggested that a rift had developed between John Manser, the chairman, and the Fleming family over a £22 a share bid by the German bank. The Fleming family has 30 per cent of the shares.

Thomson purchase

Thomson Travel Group has paid £20 million to acquire Air Travel Group from Granada. Air Travel trades as Magic of Italy, Magic of Spain and Portugal, Magic of France and Magic Cities. In its last year, it carried more than 200,000 passengers and made a pre-tax profit of £1 million on sales of £70 million.

Identica merger
Identica Partnership, the brand consultancy formed by Michael Peters, is planning to merge with Tango Design, part of Bartle Bogle Hegarty, the advertising group. BBH will take a 21 per cent stake in Identica, which will continue to operate independently.

Tax powers questioned

REGULATIONS on the complex transition to self-assessment for companies could give the Inland Revenue wide-ranging powers to fine businesses that fail to pay the correct tax, accountants have cautioned (Robert Lea writes).

At issue are the provisions that allow the Revenue to exercise "penalty powers" on any company which "deliberately or recklessly fails" to pay the

The new corporation tax regime is already in existence for companies, with profits in excess of £15 million a year, whose financial year started after July 2, this year.

Such companies are now expected to account for and pay their tax on a quarterly basis — previously they paid one lump sum nine months after the end of the financial year.

The complex administrative load is exacerbated by a big cashflow burden in the regime's transitional period, which effectively means companies will pay five years' worth of tax in four years.

Underpayment or late payment will automatically incur interest charges but, in its latest statement, there remains a wide definition of the Revenue's powers.

Ladbroke eyes Hiltons

LADBROKE GROUP is to use some of the proceeds from the sale of the Coral book-making chain to bolster its Hilton hotel business in the UK (Dominic Walsh writes).

The hotel and gaming group has drawn up a list of hotel assets that would fit its four-star Hilton National brand and is in advanced discussions on a number of possible acquisitions. The hotels it wants are

understood to include the White House Hotel, just off London's Marylebone Road, and the Ashford International in Kent. Together, the properties are worth an estimated £60 million to £70 million.

Ladbroke's decision to start buying assets rather than focusing on management contracts is designed to step up the profits growth from its Hilton arm. A Ladbroke source said:

"We're in the position of having the funds available, and where the returns make sense, which was probably not the case a few months ago, we will look at buying assets. You are buying instant profits."

Its move will be given a further boost by the imminent disposal of Coral for an estimated \$390 million — a sharp uplift on the \$263 million it paid for the business just a year ago.

Fight for Blockleys focuses on families

By ADAM JONES

THE two families that founded Blockleys will this week be centre stage in the battle to take over the Shropshire brick-maker. The board of Blockleys has rejected an all-share hostile takeover bid worth £13 million from Natural Building Materials (NBM), a rival listed on the Alternative Investment Market.

However, NBM has received acceptances representing worth 40.8 per cent of

Blockleys shares and is now intensifying its efforts to persuade the founding Blockley and Wright families to sell their stakes, worth about 8 per cent of the company.

Neither of the families has any executive role in the company. The first deadline for acceptance of the offer is on Christmas Eve. Blockleys shares traded as high as 60½p in the spring, before falling to 31p in October. They are now 40½p.

	Bank Byers	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2,619	19,011
Austria Sch	60.87	55.85
Belgium F	20.85	55.85
Canada \$	2,710	2,022
Cyprus Cyp £	0.6719	0.5544
Denmark kr	11.22	32.33
Egypt £	5.95	5.34
Finland Mk	9.05	8.30
France F	8.95	9.07
Germany DM	2,959	2,713
Greece Dr	465	126
Hong Kong \$	13.85	12.66
Iceland	129	109
Indonesia	1,686	1,643
Israel Sh	1,120	1,091
Italy Lire	7.36	6.71
Japan Yen	294.3	270.8
Japan Yen	206.91	161.38
Netherlands gld	0.686	0.571
Netherlands gld	3.342	3.047
New Zealand \$	3.35	3.11

SUNDAY TIPS

The Sunday Times: Buy First Choice. The Sunday Telegraph: Buy Caravan, Oasis, Intelli-

TSB, BSkyB, Mirror Group Newspapers. *The Mail on Sunday*: Buy British Airways, Servisair. *The Express on Sunday*: Buy Fairview Holdings, Rutland Trust, Stakis.

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مكتبة القرآن

CORPORATE PROFILE: Woolwich

Market capitalisation: £5.5 billion.
Pre-tax profits for 1997: £455.7 million.
Activities: predominately provides mortgages and savings accounts, but also offers unit trusts, life insurance, general insurance and some personal lending.
Shares: Year high, 395 1/4p; low, 315p; now, 352p.
Employees: 8,085, all but 282 of them in the UK.

John Stewart, chief executive, was elevated to the top of the company less than two years ago after the exit of Peter Robinson, who first applied the term carpet-bagger to speculators who opened building society accounts in the expectation of a windfall. Mr Stewart, formerly director of operations, was the only serious internal candidate, although Woolwich did look outside.

Six months after Woolwich's flotation, Mr Stewart invited three new non-executive directors on to the board. They included Stephen Russell, managing director of Boots, and David Ure, director responsible for corporate marketing and technical policy at Reuters. The third is John Nelson, the investment banker who is leaving his post of vice-chairman of Lazard to join Credit Suisse First Boston.

Woolwich's group finance director, Robert Jones, came from Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, the investment bank, although his roots are in accountancy and he was for many years with Touche Ross. Also a big noise from the world of accountancy is the non-executive chairman, Sir Brian Jenkins.

Other notables include the non-executive directors Lord Barrie, who was the Director-General of Fair Trading for 16 years, and Sir Peter Gregson, the former Permanent Secretary at the Department of Trade and Industry.

Woolwich is also one of the few FTSE 100 companies to boast a female executive director — Lynne Penock, who is in charge of group operations.

Woolwich has lent money to homebuyers for more than 150 years, for the most part as a building society. Last year, it floated on the stock market and entered the FTSE 100 along with two of its former peers in the mutual sector.

The timing of its conversion has not been ideal. Woolwich — famed for one of the best-known advertising catchphrases of the 1970s: "We're with the Woolwich" — has opened itself up to the scrutiny of the City at the very point at which its core business, the mortgage market, has begun to show signs of significant erosion.

For three decades, building societies grew fat on the housing market as Britain was transformed from a nation of tenants to a country of owner-occupiers. Economists estimate the building societies enjoyed 8 per cent compound growth per year from the early 1960s.

Now the mortgage market has run out of steam. Lending volumes are forecast to fall in real terms over the next few years, while a sustained period of low interest rates has put a firm squeeze on the profit margins of banks and building societies alike. Woolwich's main market is contracting.

To compound the bank's problems, a number of outsiders have entered the market with cheaper products. Unencumbered by expensive branch networks, Direct Line, Standard Life and Egg (a subsidiary of Prudential) are wooing existing borrowers with loan rates far below the conventional offerings.

Woolwich, with a market capitalisation of £5.4 billion and a 5 per cent market share, is one of the smaller converts and so not in a position to cut prices and rely on volumes to see it through this difficult stage. Instead, the bank recognises it needs to find alternative income streams, and fast.

Halifax, which faces the same dilemma but on a larger scale, is attempting to achieve this end by diversification: building a treasury operation and expanding its life insurance and investment business. This is a course tried and tested by Abbey National, the first convert in 1989.

The response of John Stewart, Woolwich's chief executive, is arguably more radical. He is seeking to reposition the bank as primarily a distributor of packaged financial services, rather than a manufacturer of loans, and follows the US example



With the Woolwich: clockwise, from top left, are John Stewart, left, who has strong board approval for the Open Plan account, and Sir Brian Jenkins; David Ure; Stephen Russell; a Woolwich removal van; a house sold through the Woolwich; and John Nelson, a non-executive director

where the stages of mortgage lending are divided into distinct industries.

Mr Stewart, who took the helm after the abrupt departure of Peter Robinson amid allegations of improper use of company expenses, acknowledges that it requires a huge culture change simply to give Woolwich a chance of achieving this goal. "We are past the point of no return, but there is a long way to go yet," he admits.

His first task has been to reshape Woolwich so that any of the conflicts common to larger banks have been eliminated. Businesses have been structured by product line, rather than process, but common services such as underwriting of risk have been teased out and stretched across the organisation. Not only does this save costs, but it also prevents fiefdoms from springing up, Mr Stewart says.

Staff, too, have had to be re-

educated. In a particularly controversial move, Woolwich made most employees reapply for their own jobs. Inevitably, some left, while others were moved elsewhere within the bank after admitting that they were unhappy in their former roles. Remuneration has also been revised to put the emphasis on personal performance.

"We had a mediocrity, not a meritocracy. Staff were paid the same regardless of their performance and they all received the same bonus," says Mr Stewart. Now the annual bonus is linked to personal performance. In theory, branch managers can earn bonuses

equivalent to 100 per cent of their salary, while branch clerks can take home as much as 25 per cent.

Looking forward, Woolwich also intends to reduce its branch network — administrative processes have already been stripped out — as alternative forms of distribution such as the telephone, Internet and digital television grow in popularity. Multi-distribution is a favoured phrase of Mr Stewart. But crucial to the distribution strategy is a radical improvement in cross-selling.

At present, banks sell on average about 1.5 different products to a single customer. For largely historical reasons, the British public prefer to take their mortgage from a building society and their pension from a life insurance company, and remain deaf to the entreaties of bancassurance. If Woolwich can break beyond two products per customer, its profitability would receive an immediate boost.

To this end, Mr Stewart aims to harness technology more effectively so that the bank may learn more about individual customers, identifying their wants and selling to needs, rather than just pushing products with little or no idea of whether the customer already has a mortgage, a credit card or a personal loan.

With such information, he believes it is possible to offer a packaged service rather than discrete products. The first fruit of this strategy has been the release of Open Plan. This is a variable-rate mortgage that comes with a current account, a credit card, a cheque book and the offer of a personal loan. Customers can draw down money against their mortgage at far lower interest rates than are available from conventional sources. In retailers' parlance, buy three products for the price of two.

Open Plan, says Mr Stewart, will enable Woolwich to

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

"Open Plan is a very good response to the threat of lower interest rates. It is the kind of product customers will like, and it won't cannibalise Woolwich's own business. What the Woolwich needs is a bit of time to develop these products over the next five years."

Hugh Pye, of Robert Fleming

"All the mortgage banks, even on a mid-term view, are in deep trouble. They have to move rapidly to acquire other income streams. It is not run or die for Woolwich, but it will just get harder and harder as its market share is eroded. It is likely to be one of the searchers for a partner."

John Aitken, of Rabobank

increase its share of the mortgage market without affecting interest margins, while cannibalising the personal loans and credit card businesses of its rivals. Woolwich can pursue this strategy purely because it has only a small personal lending business, whereas the operations of its fellow convert and near cousin Alliance & Leicester and the conventional banks are large.

The initial pilot of Open Plan has been encouraging, says Mr Stewart. A nationwide roll-out is expected sooner rather than later, with other product lines added on a staggered basis. But Mr Stewart is candid about the risks of the strategy: if Open Plan fails to gain market share for the Woolwich, the bank's chances of remaining an independent player are fairly slim.

His biggest fear is that somebody else will beat him to it, a dread that banking analysts suggest is well-founded. John Aitken, senior banking analyst with Rabobank, believes all of the mortgage banks and building societies will pursue a similar strategy so that they can build on their chief asset: their database of mortgage customers.

New entrants are attempting to offer a similar product too. Last week, Standard Life Bank said it would enter the mortgage market in January with a variable rate of 6.8 per cent, undercutting all the established players. Takers of its Freestyle mortgage will also be able to draw down personal loans, so long as they have at least 10 per cent equity in their homes.

The board is backing Mr Stewart to the hilt on Open Plan. Should it fail, they and the Woolwich could find themselves in the arms of a generous suitor.

RICHARD MILES

OUR VERDICT

Ethical expression.....5/10
Fat-cat quotient.....9/10
Financial record.....8/10
Share performance.....5/10
Attitude to staff.....6/10
Strength of brand.....6/10
Innovation.....8/10
Annual report.....7/10
City star rating.....5/10
Future prospects.....5/10
Total.....63/100

Ethical expression is evaluated by *Industry Watch*. The fat-cat quotient, in which last boardroom pay is compared to the average, is provided by *Crisp Consultants*.

65+ DESTINATIONS.
10 COUNTRIES.
(AND YOU THINK YOU
TRAVEL A LOT.)

Emirates

UNITED AIRLINES

ANA

ANA

AIR CANADA

VARIG

STAR ALLIANCE



The airline network for Earth.

The year of living dangerously

Economic historians may come to see 1998 as a watershed year. It marks the transition point from inflation to deflation and the emergence of real panic about the stability of the international monetary system.

Not that this was at all clear as the year began. At that time, most commentators focused on the prospects for higher interest rates. The US economy was booming and the debate in Britain was about overheating. Meanwhile, Europe was finally showing signs of real recovery. Admittedly, several Asian countries had recently been battered by a severe financial crisis, but those economies were only tiddlers. By contrast, China was determined both to hold its exchange rate and to grow by 8 per cent.

As this year draws to a close, how different the world looks. Concern about overheating and inflation has given way to worry about recession and even deflation. The ramifications of the Asian crisis have continued to spread, while Japan is still not on the road to recovery. China is discovering that you cannot achieve economic growth simply by forecasting it — although regional officials may need some re-education on this point. Meanwhile, the



ROGER BOOTLE

To cap it all, increasingly it seemed that the IMF was simply not cut out for the role of managing the system. There may be a case for having an IMF at all, as Milton Friedman has recently argued, but if you are going to have such an institution, then it surely has to have the financial resources commensurate with the financial muscle of modern financial markets.

Those markets continue to be a source of amusement. When equity markets crashed after the Russian default, it looked as though they were finally adjusting to a more sober valuation, but once central banks had administered a soothing dose of interest rate balm they rebounded, as though nothing had been wrong in the first place. But it is to the bond markets that you should look for the real

story. They now apparently believe not only that inflation will be very low but also that it may even turn negative. Even so, on Wall Street, many an equity analyst can still be found assuming that deflation remains firmly locked in its box — or that if it isn't, then much lower bond yields will be good for equities anyway.

Among the scribblers, someone who has had an extremely good year is John Maynard Keynes. As the Japanese problem has seemed more and more intractable, and as deflationary forces have spread throughout the global economy, dog-eared copies of his *General Theory* have been dusted down and re-read with approbation.

In the land of the living, Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Fed, has also had a good year, despite sharp criticism of the way he handled LTCM and the subsequent interest rate reductions. From the very beginning, he was acutely aware of the threat of deflation. At some stage, we are going to have to elevate him to a higher plane. "St Alan" does not sound quite right, but it at least conveys the right message. For miracles are what the world now seems to expect of him.

Some day soon his halo is

going to slip. I do not see how he is going to ease the stock market down. He feels that the inter-related dangers of a financial crash and deflation compel him to cut interest rates, while hoping that the drip feed of falling profit stories will cause stock prices to subside gently.

But when so many of the leading US stocks, particularly in the information technology sector, make hardly any profits anyway, yet still soar to untold heights, investors have learnt to disregard profits. Meanwhile, interest rate reductions are taken as the signal to drive stock prices higher. The result is to increase the severity of the eventual crash — which is precisely what Greenspan dreads.

Accordingly, if your Christmas stocking does not include any good new books this year, you should try to track down a copy of a good one published long ago — Galbraith's *The Great Crash*. That account of the events leading up to the stock market crash of 1929 has long been of interest to historians, but as the events of this past year unfolded, I found myself returning to it, and becoming alarmed as I recognised myself with its central theme — financial markets unhinged and a world flirting with disaster.

Safety doubts cast shadow over cruise ship expansion

Bigger vessels mean greater scrutiny for the maritime industry despite its good record, writes Peter Harrison

As thousands of Britons set off for Christmas cruises, the maritime industry is getting ready for what it sees as another potential boom. Larger and larger cruise ships are being built, and, though the industry has an exemplary safety record, worries about what might happen if something goes wrong on these giant liners are starting to surface.

"How many ships would be needed to rescue 5,000 people? That was the question from Bill O'Neill, secretary-general of the UN's International Maritime Organisation, that sparked the debate. Mr O'Neill was, in effect, issuing a clear warning that safety technology may not have kept up with the swelling capacity of modern cruise ships.

The warning was almost tested last week, when the cruise liner *Monarch of the Seas* struck rocks as it left the Caribbean island of St Maarten. The impact holed three of the ship's 18 watertight compartments. And although the ship was safely grounded, and the 2,557 passengers evacuated, it was "a very serious high-impact collision", according to sources involved in the operation.

Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, the operator, insists the beaching "was just a precautionary measure for the convenience of our guests". But the decision to beach the ship, rather than heading for the safety of the port only a quarter of a mile away, is the clearest indication that time was short and something was very wrong.

Disaster may have been averted, but Mr O'Neill's vision of a future *Titanic* disaster is disturbing. The industry is pushing for larger ships. Plans for the *America World City*, with its 6,200 passengers and 2,400 crew, may be on the back burner. But the industry's ob-

session with size means that ships like it will surely be built. The *Estonia* disaster in 1994 illustrated the horrors of evacuating a ship in an emergency. True, the ferry developed a list extraordinarily quickly — but the fact remains that interior design was the real problem. What else could account for the deaths of 86 per cent of the passengers?

Once the list developed, corridors became vertical chasms, which could only be leapt by the fit and the young. But the biggest barrier to escape was the open foyer on deck four. This open area spanned the width of the ship, and had two main staircases, located at its centre, to create a grand visual effect. It is a feature shared by many cruise ships. As the list developed, the corridors, the foyers and the staircases all became insurmountable obstacles.

True, cruise ships cannot be compared to roll-on, roll-off ferries (ro-ros). Cruise ships lack the vast, internal car-deck space that makes ro-ros so vulnerable to loss of stability. Cruise ships are highly subdivided, and have much higher bulkhead decks, so they do not sink so quickly. But cruise ships still have many open spaces, and accidents always have and always will happen.

Mr O'Neill questions the current rules, which require ships to be able to evacuate all passengers and crew within 30 minutes. "It's 30 minutes long enough to launch survival craft on ships carrying 4,000. These are not seafarers, they are people on holiday." This statistic is brought into focus by a bit of arithmetic. Assuming we are hoping to save the crew as well, more than 5,000 people need to be brought off in that half hour.

This means about three people a second. Admiral William Kime, former head of marine safety for the US Coast Guard,



The bow door of the stricken ferry *Estonia* is lifted from the bed of the Baltic Sea

feels that safety is already being adequately addressed in cruise ship design. But he admits: "There have been few safety innovations in lifetime design and function since the *Titanic*."

Cruise vessels may be more stable than ro-ros, but their internal design is less well governed. The International SOLAS convention recommends that on ro-ros "escape routes shall be evaluated by an evacuation analysis, early in the design process". Mr O'Neill is keen for these regulations to be extended to cover the cruise industry.

John McNeice, a cruise ship interior designer, is also keen to see evacuation modelling developed. "Queuing studies are already performed, so evacuation studies would not be particularly onerous."

And no matter how efficient evacuation procedures, this only addresses half the problem. "Getting people off the ship is merely removing them from the source of immediate danger," one seafarer said. "It's not the same as taking them to a place of safety. The sea itself can be a greater killer."

Once passengers have left the vessel, survival depends on how quickly other vessels could reach the scene of the accident. In the case of the *Estonia*, ten commercial vessels took part in the rescue, alongside 17 helicopters, and numerous coastguard vessels. Between them, the ships managed to rescue 34 of the 232 passengers known to have escaped the sink-

ing ship. As with the *Titanic*, the tragedies of the *Scandinavian Star*, the *Herald of Free Enterprise* and the *Estonia* all led to improvements in safety. "But why did these accidents have to happen before the shipping world noticed something was wrong?" Mr O'Neill asked.

The industry argues that it is mindful of the problems. Gwyn Hughes, managing director of P&O Cruises, argues that the exemplary safety record of cruise liners has been taken into account. The shipping industry is not complacent. But many feel now is the time to take a serious look at cruise ship safety, before the next generation of ships is built, rather than after.

Peter Harrison is staff editor of Fairplay Shipping Weekly

Taming of the wild west

The West

BBC2, 7.30pm
Hidden away in the early afternoon is this superb eight-part documentary on the settlement of the American West. It comes from Ken Burns, the producer who masterminded an equally distinguished television history of the American Civil War which was shown on the BBC in the late 1980s. The West is presented in the same style, drawing as far as possible on contemporary sources, diaries and letters, paintings, photographs and music. Today's historians add their gloss. Programme one runs from 1800 to 1806 and its theme is how the original inhabitants of the American continent found their land and culture being violated by the European and Asian conquerors. The stirring commentary is appropriate to an epic tale.

Sacred Special: Web of the Spider Monkey

ITV, 4.40pm

The first of three wildlife films on successive days, all in this unusual teatime slot, is set in the Amazon rainforest and features one of its most distinctive inhabitants. The spider monkey is aptly named, being spidery in shape and covered with a thick black fur surprising for such a hot and humid climate. The creature spends its entire life high up in the rainforest canopy eating fruit. In this it is helped by having the longest prehensile tail in the world, which it wraps round a branch thus leaving its hands free to reach for food. The message of the film is that but for the spider monkey, and indeed other animal life, many of the trees in the rainforest would die. This is because in eating fruit they disperse seeds. But spider monkeys are under threat from deforestation and hunting and if they go, the trees will disappear too.

The Canterbury Tales

BBC2, 7.30pm

Geoffrey Chaucer is the source for the latest animation from the Anglo-Russian team that previously tackled such classics as the Bible and Shakespeare. This is not a project that will commend itself to the literary purist. Squeezing *Hamlet* or *Othello* into half an hour meant losing most of Shakespeare's text and while *The Canterbury Tales* allows a little more space, three



A scene from an animated version of *The Canterbury Tales* (BBC2, 7.30pm)

tales per episode ensures a breathless pace. The images are the thing and the format allows plenty of approaches, with puppetry employed for the pilgrims and drawn animation for their stories. Tonight we hear from the Nun Priest, the Knight and the Wife of Bath and the voices include those of Bob Peck, Sean Bean and Billie Whitelaw. For those who find Jonathan Myerson's modern script too colloquial, a version using Chaucer's Middle English is being shown tomorrow.

Funny Women

BBC2, 9.50pm

Many of us first became aware of Stephanie Cole on *Tenko*, a prisoner of war drama and not exactly a barrel of laughs, but in recent years she has concentrated on comedy, and fully justifies inclusion in this series. Her personality has been playing women much older than her years, a tradition which began in her days in repertory and was memorably continued as the crotchety Diana in *Waiting for God*. She always wanted to be an actor, was expelled from school for throwing a book at a Latin teacher who mocked her theatrical ambitions and has since become one of television's perfect antidotes to Christmas shopping. Hal Kemp's *Siberian Sleigh Ride* is among the foot-tappers tonight, as is work by the bands of the brothers Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey. Chick Webb, Red Norvo and Jimmy Luncheon. The focus is necessarily American but there are contributions from Django Reinhardt. Peter Baines

RADIO CHOICE

How to be Happy

Radio 4, 8.00pm

This is a really useful programme in that it enables the listener to shout rubbish at the radio from time to time: great therapy. Contributors include a novelist, a therapist, a neuroscientist, a couple who are piano tuners and 50 people gathered in a London hotel to hear a lecture by Ben Renshaw, who runs the Happiness Project (a title which was enough to make me laugh). There are no definitive conclusions, for no two people are made happy in the same way, but the historian Theodore Zeldin surely gets closest to a universal truth when he says that being happy comes from giving joy to others in order to get it back, a point implicitly made by some unhappy contributors, who come across as being self-obsessed.

RADIO 1 (BBC)

6.30am Chris Moyles 8.00 Simon Mayo 12.00 Kevin Greening 2.00pm Mark Radcliffe 4.00 Dave Pearce 6.00 Lorraine Live: The Christmas Party 12.00 The Breakfast 2.00am Emma 4.00 Scott Mills

RADIO 2 (BBC)

6.00am Alex Lester 7.30 Wake Up to Wogan 9.30 Ken Bruce 12.00 Jimmy Young 2.00pm Ed Stewart 5.00 Johnnie Walker 7.00 Humphrey Lyttelton 8.00 Big Band Christmas Special: Sheila introduces the BBC Big Band in a concert recorded at Birmingham's Symphony Hall, conducted by Barry Ford. 8.30 The New Jazz Standards 9.30 The Rock 'n' Roll Year. Presented by Brian Matthew 10.30 Richard Ainsworth 12.00 Katrina Leschich 3.00am Mo Duta

RADIO 5 LIVE (BBC)

6.00am Morning Reports 6.00 Breakfast with Julian Worricker and Annie Webster 8.00 Brian Hayes 12.00 The Midday News 1.30 Race and Go 4.00 Drive with Peter Allen and Jane Garvey 7.00 News Edge. Presented by David Mervin 7.30 The Wildlife Show. An insight into the life of a footballer 8.00 Trevor Barking's Monday Match. Christmas Affairs v Aston Villa 10.00 Late Night Live 1.00am Up All Nights

VIRGIN

6.00am Jeremy Clark 9.30 Russ Williams 1.00pm Nick Abbott 4.00 Harriet Scott 6.45 Jerry Lee Grace 10.00 James Merritt 2.00am Richard Allen

TALK RADIO

6.00am Bill Overton & Sally Mean 8.00 Scott Chisholm 12.00pm Lorraine Kelly 2.00 News 4.00 Peter Dinkley 6.00 The Sports Zone 9.00 Mike Allen 1.00am Ian Collins

Christmas Cocktails

Radio 3, 7.00pm

Several promising new programmes and series start today on Radio 3 and I mention this one not because of the seasonal topicality of the title but because the show is only seasonal in the sense that it features tunes with a Christmas flavour. The series runs every night this week and is a tribute to the swing bands of the 1950s, some of the most cheerful music in the catalogue and, therefore, a perfect antidote to Christmas shopping. Hal Kemp's *Siberian Sleigh Ride* is among the foot-tappers tonight, as is work by the bands of the brothers Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey. Chick Webb, Red Norvo and Jimmy Luncheon. The focus is necessarily American but there are contributions from Django Reinhardt. Peter Baines

BBC WORLD SERVICE

5.00am The World Today 7.00 News 7.15 On the Spot: Christmas Eve at the End of the Road 7.30 The Village Choir Show 8.00 News 8.15 Peace to Be Thanked 8.15 News 8.30 News 8.45 News 9.00 News 9.15 News 9.30 News 9.45 News 10.00 News 10.15 News 10.30 News 10.45 News 11.00 News 11.15 News 11.30 News 11.45 News 12.00 News 12.15 News 12.30 News 12.45 News 1.00 News 1.15 News 1.30 News 1.45 News 2.00 News 2.15 News 2.30 News 2.45 News 3.00 News 3.15 News 3.30 News 3.45 News 4.00 News 4.15 News 4.30 News 4.45 News 5.00 News 5.15 News 5.30 News 5.45 News 6.00 News 6.15 News 6.30 News 6.45 News 7.00 News 7.15 News 7.30 News 7.45 News 8.00 News 8.15 News 8.30 News 8.45 News 9.00 News 9.15 News 9.30 News 9.45 News 10.00 News 10.15 News 10.30 News 10.45 News 11.00 News 11.15 News 11.30 News 11.45 News 12.00 News 12.15 News 12.30 News 12.45 News 1.00 News 1.15 News 1.30 News 1.45 News 2.00 News 2.15 News 2.30 News 2.45 News 3.00 News 3.15 News 3.30 News 3.45 News 4.00 News 4.15 News 4.30 News 4.45 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'Ow you say, entertainment, n'est-ce pas?

I blame the Spice Girls. All costume dramas now have a feisty female heroine, a "Crucible" as it were. Actually it should be "Cagney Spice". You know she is a liberated modern woman, because she smokes a nice round Cuban. It has become the French cultural theorist that land Barthes would have called a semiotic "sign", indicating a determined and independent female, bent on self-fulfilment at any cost. (Monica Lewinsky's mistake was not realising that you're supposed to smoke it.)

Patrick Harbison's adaptation of Frenchman's Creek (ITV, Sunday) updated Daphne du Maurier's novel, both in this respect and in shifting the period forward 20 years so that a simple story of a book on quasi-serious religious and political overtones.

This wave at feminism and politics, with its suggestions of con-

flicts of principle and the ambiguous interplay between personal passion, religious commitment and affairs of state, was all somewhat cosmetic and tended to confuse the simplicity of a good old-fashioned yarn.

Because, as every reader of romances knows, French men are much better lovers. Zey smolder weath passion: zey ave dark leguid eye-balls. Six-pack tumblers, long romantic locks and zair nostrils fair in zee wind like zose of a 'orse. Oo could possibly want ur floppy old English puddenge when she could ave Anthony Delon?

Du Maurier said this was the only real romantic novel she ever wrote and it is undoubtedly a classic of the genre. The bored wife, the dull but decent husband, the caddish scheming aristocratic seducer, the spooky child, the dark, dangerous stranger—all the ingredients are there for Delia Smith's

How To Cook A Romantic Novel. Add in mysterious slightly menacing servants, pursuing a secret agenda, a decrepit mansion full of creepy creaks and creaks, and you have the perfect confection.

Tara Fitzgerald is a beautiful and sensual heroine, but, refreshingly, not in the conventional way of a model or other miscellaneous glamour-puss. This is the opposite of *Charlie's Angels* syndrome, the casting disorder that puts Samantha Janus into leading roles in cop shows simply because the guys whose six-packs contain lager and are resting on their sparsely tressed like to ogle a dolly bird. This was beautiful, crisply directed, tenderly honest nonsense.

I finally caught up with *Gardening Neighbours* (BBC2, Friday), just in time for the end-of-show party. The frenetic populists at Bazal productions must have mixed feelings about BBC Birmingham's se-



Paul Hoggart

ries, in that it has been a sincerely flattering imitation of the *Ground Force* *Changing Rooms* genre, but done in a more thoughtful, leisurely way. There was much more sense of the reality of the participants' lives and the way their community gelled (or failed to).

It was also a good advert for Sheffield, a regional city with an unglamorous image, which contains some of the handsomest Vic-

torian suburbs in the country. Kenbourne Grove was a charming example, built round its small patch of communal greenery, with a genuinely neighbourly feel.

The two designers were a lot less obtrusive than their Bazal counterparts, providing only as much guidance and creative intervention as the householders seemed to want. In some cases this was almost nothing. The result was a rich mixture of the tasteful, the restful, the themed, the adventurous and outright follies. I suspect that there is something that emanates from the soil on this island, because the desire to create follies seems instinctive to all social classes.

There is a house around the corner from my own in North London which is sufficed with follies such as a temple built with bright blue, marble-effect pillars, a gaily painted cast-iron fireplace in the middle of a flowerbed. The effect is joyous,

charming and completely ludicrous. People come from miles around to admire it.

One Sheffield couple had a huge blue mosaic snake winding across their lawn, while another had turned their patch into a mock fairground, complete with a coconut shy which could be packed away when not needed, a huge painting of a beaming Donald McGill fat lady and an iron pergola with the word "FUN" prominently displayed on it. And all their own work.

This type of series is great for giving you ideas and I am already planning a bright pink papier-mâché model of Angkor Wat for our own patch of waste ground.

But the prize must go to the hippyish Christian couple who had kept their baby's afterbirth in the house. When the moment was right, they dropped it into the hole they had dug to plant a tree. This is

a recreation of a druidic rite, apparently, but that didn't stop it being revolting to watch as it slithered down with a clammy sploosh.

For the previous five episodes *Cold Feet* (ITV, Sunday) has walked a tightrope between satire and sentimentality, frequently falling off on the sugary side. Mushy or not, the series has always been fun thanks to the unusually crisp wit-of-the-script, direction and editing, and convincingly understated performances from all the main characters.

Last night it ended with a nicely turned pastiche of the station scene from *Brief Encounter*, before finally separating the pregnant Rachel from the distraught Adam.

BBC1

6.00am Business Breakfast (BS315)
7.00 BBC Breakfast News (T) (99988)
9.00 Children's BBC: *Swampy*, *High Valley* (747044) 9.25 *The Farm Game* (740413) 9.55 *Teletubbies* (9004131)
10.20 News; Regional News; Weather (T) (8405841)

10.30 *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West* (1991) Animated sequel to Steven Spielberg's 1986 blockbuster chronicling the further adventures of the mousekeweenaw family. Voiced by James Stewart. Directed by Phil Nibbelink, Simon Wells (T) (8126973)

11.40 *The New Adventures of Superman* Clark finally summons up the courage to ask Lois for a date — just as Luthor returns from the dead (T) (7172518)

12.25pm *Wipeout* (T) (9020841)

12.50 *The Weather Show* (T) (7389503)

1.00 *One O'Clock News*; Weather (T) (92976)

1.30 *Regional News*; Weather (45108337)

1.40 *Neighbours* Madge declares war on Lou (T) (8710654)

2.05 *Emergency Dogs* Home Lionel Blair's adopted mongrels (86003179)

2.35 *Due South* Kowalski and two fellow cops call on Fraser's powers of deduction to work out who committed a murder they've witnessed (T) (2812680)

3.20 *Children's BBC*; *Noddy* (8735053) 3.30 *Enchanted Lands: The Magic of the Fairyland* (8735054) 3.40 *Casper* (8258055) 4.00 *Sooty and Badger* (1105118) 4.15 *Ant and the Chaparral* (6686222) 4.40 *Goosebumps* (2505247) 5.00 *Newsround* (2185559) 5.10 *Blue Peter* (8804315)

5.30 *Neighbours* Madge declares war on Lou (T) (8710654)

6.00 *Six O'Clock News*; Weather (T) (824)

6.30 *Regional News*; Weather (T) (824)

7.00 *This Is Your Life* Michael Aspel surprises another unsuspecting guest with the big red book (T) (1570)

7.30 *Here and Now* Sankar, Gula investigates the pickpocketing in or the Christmas bonanza and Chris Carr reports on the legal hangovers that can follow the office party (T) (860)

8.00 *EastEnders* George picks up his blood test results (T) (8636)

9.00 *Nine O'Clock News*; Regional News; Weather (T) (8337)

9.30 *The Glass Menagerie* One-off edition of the fly-on-the-wall documentary (T) (48082)

10.00 *Night Watch* (TVM 1994) An investigation into an art forgery leads to trouble for two UN troubleshooters who uncover a fiendish plot masterminded by a cunning millionaire. Crime thriller, starring Pierce Brosnan. Directed by David Jackson (T) (800421)

11.35 *Think Like a Man* Over With Julian Clary (T) (813570)

12.00 *Uncommon Valor* (1983) A retired colonel recruits a team of Vietnam veterans to rescue his son from a POW camp in Laos. Action adventure, starring Gene Hackman and Patrick Swayze. Directed by Ted Kotcheff (T) (597938)

1.45 *Weather* (7945071)

1.50 *BBC News 24* (45029513)

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BBC2

7.00am Children's BBC: *Wiggly Park* (907888) 7.05 *Teletubbies* (902131) 7.30 *Yogi's Treasure Hunt* (1914518) 7.50 *Blue Peter* (907013) 8.20 *East End* (2140822) 8.35 *Taz-Mania* (983782) 9.00 *Animal World* (2342286) 9.30 *The Simpsons* (2491247) 12.50 *The Simpsons* (2491247)

1.15 *The Simpsons* (T) (5893002)

1.40 *Timewatch* Another chance to examine the evidence that Hitler had already decided against an invasion of Britain before the RAF's victory in the 1940 Battle of Britain (T) (8180773)

2.30 *The West* New series chronicling the colonisation of the American West (T) (2342605)

3.55 *News*; Regional News; Weather (T) (904957)

4.00 *The Horse Soldiers* (1959) A Union cavalry officer is ordered to demolish a Confederate territory. Western, starring John Wayne and William Holden. Directed by John Ford (T) (8718637)

5.55 *Magical Meteorology* (T) (83334)

6.00 *The Simpsons* Bart is faced with a dilemma when he becomes key witness to an alleged assault case (T) (413905)

6.25 *Real the Hunt* New daily animated series from the Wallace and Gromit team, charting the antics of four Plesione dogs (T) (702891)

6.35 *Sideways* The travellers pursue Colonel Rickman to a world of wine. Comedy. Directed by John Ford (T) (8718637)

7.15 *Real the Hunt* The friends enter a talent competition (T) (828280)

7.30 *The Canterbury Tales* Animated modern-language version of Chaucer's tales by Jonathan Myerson (T) (8718637)

8.00 *Top Gear* Blood, Salt and Tears. Tiff Needell celebrates 100 years of the land-speed record and looks at what drives the men who set out to become the fastest person on wheels (T) (8680)

8.30 *University Challenge* Special edition for the quiz's 35th anniversary (T) (7995)

9.00 *Waiting for God* Diana refuses to enter into the Christmas spirit and Tom invites a couple of homeless people to spend the holiday in Harvey's flat (T) (137421)

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HTV

5.30am ITN Morning News (46637)
6.00 GMTV (1021421)
6.25 ITN News (437150)
9.30 HTV News (T) (8279518)
9.35 *ITV: House of Toons* Tiny Toon Adventures (1947985) 10.00 *Rocky and the Dodos* (3331888) 10.15 *Art Attack* Christmas Crackers (7237173)

10.40 *Digby, the Biggest Dog in the World* (1973) A sheepdog gulps down a scientist's secret growth formula and mushrooms to colossal proportions. With Jim Dale and Spike Milligan. Directed by John McGrath (T) (1410870)

12.30pm HTV News (T) (8703063)

12.30pm HTV News (T) (8703063)

1.30 *Shortland Street* (87044)

1.30 *Crossroads* New series (T) (29957)

2.00 *Wheel of Fortune* (T) (6150)

2.30 *ITN News* (T) (8279518)

2.35 *ITV News* (T) (8279518)

2.40 *Sharpe* Richard finds himself wrongly imprisoned for stealing Napoleon's treasure (1/8) (T) (7984818)

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5.00 *ITN News* (T) (8703063)

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5.30 *Shortland Street* (87044)

5.30 *C*



SHIPSHAPE 38

Safety doubts
cast over liner
expansion

BUSINESS

YEAR END 38

Roger Bootle
looks back
on 1998



BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

MONDAY DECEMBER 21 1998

Outlook for jobs worst for five years

By JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS EDITOR

JOB prospects are the worst for five years and the trend looks similar to the recession in the early 1990s, according to the latest gloomy readings from the UK economy.

A survey of more than 2,000 companies by Manpower found "strong evidence that the economy is faltering". The employment agency said that job prospects had deteriorated across manufacturing and services as well as the public sector.

Separately, the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) has cut its growth forecast for the British economy which it now believes will see negative inflation — or falling prices — in 2002. This will increase pressure for further cuts in interest rates.

Doug McWilliams, the CEBR chief executive, said: "This will be a new world for most people working today who have spent their entire working lives in an inflationary environment. In the future we will no longer be able to think in terms of annual rounds of wage and price increases."

Manpower's survey shows that, for the first three months of next year, 16 per cent of em-

ployers are predicting an increase in job levels with the same percentage expecting a decrease. The agency said this represents the sharpest fall in job prospects since 1991: a year ago, 10 per cent more companies were expecting to increase employment levels than were predicting to cut jobs.

The CEBR forecasts negative growth of 0.1 per cent for the economy next year, a revision downwards from the 0.4 per cent predicted in September. It said that it was now more pessimistic because consumer confidence had weakened more than expected and recent figures had indicated that unsold stocks were higher than expected. This compares with the Treasury's forecast of growth in 1999 of about 1 per cent, a judgment shared by the Bank of England.

The CEBR argued that de-stocking will depress growth over the next two years, with manufacturing industry contracting by 2.9 per cent in 1999 and growth in services slowing almost to a standstill.

It forecast that unemployment would increase by half a million by 2002.

Stagnant growth will mean

sharply lower UK base rates. The CEBR forecasts that base rates will fall to below 3 per cent in 2001 and to below 2.5 per cent the following year.

However, GfK, the company that compiles consumer confidence surveys for the EU, said Britain was in danger of talking itself into a "hypod recession".

It said British consumers remain confident about their own finances but have been battered into pessimism about the outlook for the economy by "excessively gloomy media reports".

GfK's latest survey shows that confidence overall dipped back in December, having recovered in November. However, within the headline confidence level, GfK has again found a deep split between people's confidence about their own prospects, which remains quite high, and confidence in the outlook for the broader economy which has collapsed.

Based on its latest findings, GfK said consumer spending could be higher next year than current forecasts and that the economy overall could grow by 2 per cent. However, 63 per cent of those polled predicted a rise in joblessness next year.



Lord Simpson, GEC's managing director, is believed to want to join forces with a US company, although a wholesale merger with BAe would create a £23 billion company

GEC board to discuss BAe tie-up

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

BRITISH AEROSPACE and GEC this week enter a critical stage in the talks that could lead to the first large-scale consolidation in the European defence industry.

GEC's board is expected to hold an emergency board meeting today, amid signs that DaimlerChrysler Aerospace (Dasa) is pressing BAe for a quick decision on their proposed merger.

GEC's last-minute intervention threatens to scupper the BAe/Dasa deal. Contributing to its Marconi division to the proposed link-up is believed to be unpopular with DaimlerChrysler because it would dilute the German group's holding in the merged entity.

Another alternative for GEC would be a wholesale merger with BAe, a move that would create a company worth £23 billion. Both companies are in intense negotiations with each other and with the Government, which would need to approve a merger.

The Government has been a strong advocate of consolidation in European aerospace and defence in order to make European companies better able to compete with the defence giants of the US. But it is thought that the Government would prefer to involve Dasa in any GEC/BAe initiative.

A full merger between BAe

and GEC would complete a deal which has been a source of constant speculation as the world aerospace market has consolidated. Europe faces tough pressure from the US. Although it is more difficult for European companies to converge, governments are moving increasingly to support cross-border ties.

BAe's plans to merge with Dasa would have created cost savings of nearly £300 million, analysts believe. These would mainly have come from joining their production of the Eurofighter — the four-nation European combat aircraft. The Eurofighter programme is worth £40 billion.

GEC may have to overcome boardroom spats to strike a merger with BAe. It has been suggested that Lord Simpson of Dunkeld, managing director, wants instead for the company to join forces with a US company. This year GEC bought Tracor, a US defence company, for \$800 million. Big US defence names which GEC could be looking at include Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Raytheon.

If Marconi was absorbed by BAe before it went on to merge with Dasa then GEC would not be left out of the equation, but BAe need not be concerned about its own interest being greatly diluted.

Newspaper war looming in London

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR

AN OLD-FASHIONED newspaper war is about to break out in London as News International pushes ahead with plans to launch a new evening newspaper in the capital.

The new paper, which will be free, is expected to be launched early next year. It will be aimed at the classified advertising base of the

Evening Standard, owned by Associated Newspapers, publisher of the *Daily Mail*.

News International, owner of *The Times*, has, it is believed, been planning the launch of a free evening newspaper for London for some time. Plans have now been accelerated by news that Associated is at work on a free daily for London, which would be distributed to morning commuters using the Tube. Associated is aiming for the morning to avoid cannibalising sales of its *Evening Standard*.

Richard Stott, former editor of the *Daily Mirror*, has been working on dummy issues of the News International publication, which will probably be partly financed by sponsorship money.

The sudden revival of competition in the London newspaper market is reminiscent of a decade ago, when Robert Max-

well launched the *Daily News* and the late Lord Rothermere, the *Standard* proprietor, revived, for a period, the *London Evening News* as a spoiler.

In 1986 News International talked of launching a new evening paper, *The London Post*, but it turned out to be a disguise for the dramatic move of its national titles away from Fleet Street to Wapping. It is not clear what the News International free paper will

be called, but *The London Post* or *London Today* are obvious possibilities.

The economics of a new free London paper may be difficult, particularly going into an economic slowdown, but winning a slice of the capital's classified advertising, particularly recruitment, could be lucrative. Editorial costs would be relatively low because the paper could call on resources of a big news-gathering machine.

Windfalls on way as Australians win NPI

By ADAM JONES

A WINDFALL of at least £300 will be paid next autumn to about 630,000 people who hold life assurance or pension policies issued by NPI, the British insurer that is being bought by AMP of Australia in a £2.7 billion deal.

NPI's longest-standing and highest-value policyholders will receive a further cash payment — worth thousands of pounds in some cases — to reflect their seniority.

Holders of with-profits policies, who number 440,000, will enjoy increased final payments when their policies mature. However, since some mature over 25 years, this will not be a quick "cash-in-hand" benefit. With-profits terminal payouts can also be hit by poor stock market conditions.

The deal with AMP, which has to be approved by NPI policyholders in the coming year, has been reached in the face of competition from UK insurers thought to include OGU and Britannia.

The AMP deal values NPI at about £1.9 billion. AMP will put up £50 million to cover the distribution of windfall payments in the third quarter of 1999. Another £1.4 billion will be "drip-fed" into the NPI life fund and received by policyholders as their policies mature.

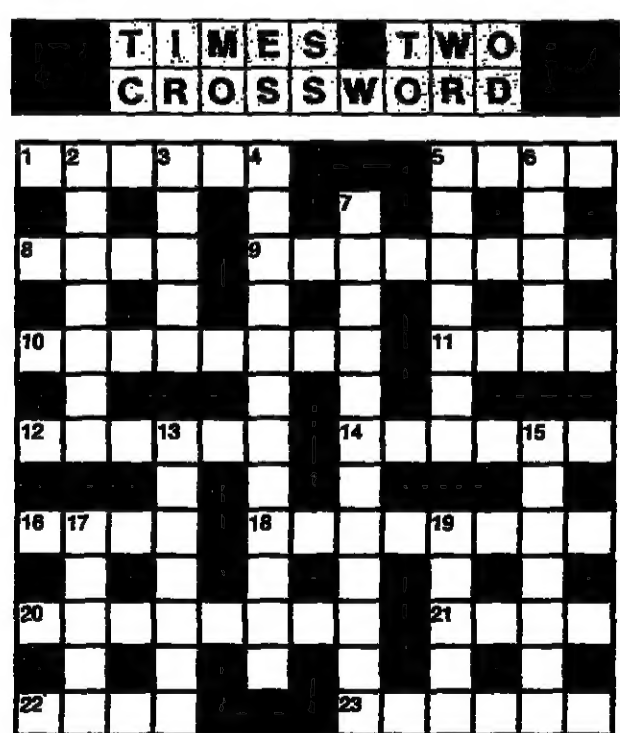
AMP will contribute a further £800 million to NPI's capital base, giving it the financial strength to invest more money in equities. NPI put itself up for sale in October because its small size meant that

it was not allowed, under investment regulations, to put as much money into shares as it wished.

A spokesman for NPI said that job losses were unlikely. He said that it was not possible to suggest a maximum cash figure that a policyholder might receive, adding: "Payments will vary from several hundred to several thousand."

AMP is already active in the UK financial sector, owning Pearl Assurance, Henderson, the fund manager, and 49 per cent of Virgin Direct, which sells pensions, life insurance, Peps and savings accounts.

AMP will use NPI's relationship with independent financial advisers to sell more Pearl Assurance products.



No 1594

ACROSS

- 1 Sailcloth (6)
- 5 Lull; quieten (4)
- 8 Report: Universe started with Big one (4)
- 9 Eating greedily fast (8)
- 10 Really happen (4,4)
- 11 Relaxation, melting (4)
- 12 Symbol of warm home (6)
- 14 Pulsates painfully (6)
- 16 Skim along evade creditors (4)
- 18 In its original state; ancient (8)
- 20 Thus (wrongly) designated (2,6)
- 21 Be touching (4)
- 22 Group of animals (4)
- 23 Widen, expand (6)

DOWN

- 2 Fashionable; braised in wine (1,2,4)
- 3 Indistinct (5)
- 4 Soften bad news (5,3,4)
- 5 Gun holder (7)
- 6 One expected on Thursday night (5)
- 7 Forgetful (6,6)
- 13 England's smallest county (7)
- 15 Lavish spread (7)
- 17 Imprecise; not secured (5)
- 19 Lag behind; path (5)

SOLUTION TO NO 1593

ACROSS: 1 William 5 Stand 8 Brown 9 Douglas 10 Raspberry 12 Web 13 Ginger 14 Jumble 17 Lee 18 Propriety 20 Aerated 21 Ghana 22 Henry 24 Outlaws
DOWN: 1 Weber 2 Loo 3 Ignoble 4 Modern 5 Saucy 6 Allowable 7 Disable 11 Sanhedrin 13 Goliath 15 Upright 16 Voodoo 18 Pithy 19 Yeats 22 Aga

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Art auctioneers left out of the picture

FROM ADAM SAGE IN PARIS

FRENCH authorities are dragging their feet over opening up the country's lucrative art market to international auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's.

The delay will ensure the continued flow to London and New York of French art treasures, such as Claude Monet's *Waterloo Bridge*, which was sold by Christie's for £3.2 million this year.

But it will also penalise both auction houses since they will

continue to be excluded from a country that was the centre of international art sales until the 1950s.

Both Sotheby's and Christie's have invested heavily in new and luxurious Parisian premises this year in the hope of staging sales in the French capital. Yet last week, the French Government said it had abandoned a commitment to end the monopoly of French auctioneers over the national market before next year.



Le Coup de Vent by Gustave Courbet fetched £1.4 million

It said a lack of parliamentary time had forced it to postpone legislation designed to demolish the restrictions that have been ruled illegal by the European Commission.

"The Bill may come back in 1999, although we cannot be sure," said a Justice Ministry spokesman. The postponement represents the latest in a long line of victories for the 460 French public notaries who, under Gallic law, have the exclusive right to undertake auctions in France. They extracted a government promise to pay them Fr450 million (£48 million) in compensation for the loss of their monopoly, but want more.

Reform would transform the global art market. In the first half of this year, £169 million of Christie's £527 million sales was generated by 19th and 20th century art, in which French work was dominant. Alongside *Waterloo Bridge*, it sold *La Promenade d'Argenteuil*, by Monet, for £3.1 million, and *Le Coup de Vent*, by Gustave Courbet, for £1.4 million.

Self-assessment launch cost £800m, says taxman's report

By CAROLINE MERRELL

THE total cost of introducing the self-assessment tax regime was about £800 million, according to a report from the Inland Revenue.

The exercise involved a £60 million training programme to help Revenue staff in 600 offices to get to grips with the new process. Self-assessment affected nine million people, 85,000 tax agents, 350,000 employers and 25,000 Revenue staff. The Revenue said that self-assessment was not

deemed to be a cost-saving exercise. Instead, it was hoped that it was an exercise in simplification and streamlining.

The report said that 400 people and organisations had responded to a Revenue survey on the new system. Responses showed that practitioners and members of the public, in particular pensioners, felt that the system needed to be simplified. Those responding were concerned about pension premiums, trading loss carry-

backs, overseas tax credits and farming profits.

The Inland Revenue blamed the complexity of the tax system for the problems with self-assessment. The report said: "Simplification of the law is, however, a matter for ministers and Parliament, and proposals for legislative change will be considered by Treasury ministers as part of the normal Budget process."

Power questioned, page 36

Bank of Scotland Branches Variable Rate Mortgages are decreasing from 4th January 1999.

The new rates are:

Home Loan Rate 7.69% per annum.
Premier Flexi Mortgage Rate 7.19% per annum.

For existing customers this rate will apply from the first payment date on or after 4th January 1999.

For mortgages provided by Banking Direct, a Division of Bank of Scotland the following rate will apply from 4th January 1999 for both new and existing customers:

Banking Direct Mortgage Rate (Variable) 7.69% per annum.

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